

AFRICANUS JOURNAL

Vol. 4 No. 2 | November 2012



This page intentionally left blank

Contents

- 2 Goals of the Journal
- 3 Life of Africanus
- 3 Other Front Matter
- 5 God's Amazing Work in China: My Personal Testimony
Kevin Xiyi Yao
- 8 Critical Analysis of the Chinese Translation of *Logos* in the Gospel of John
Mark Chuanhang Shan
- 22 No Other Name: No Other Needed Identity
Woodrow E. Walton
- 29 A Divisive Great Commission? "Growth" versus "Discipleship" in the Role of the Church
Jim Hartman
- 35 Review of *Word Made Global: Stories of African Christianity in New York City* by Mark R. Gornik
Daewon Moon
- 39 Review of *Christianity and Chinese Culture* edited by Miikka Ruokanen and Paulors Huang
Mark Chuanhang Shan
- 43 Review of *The Holy Spirit in Mission: Prophetic Speech and Action in Christian Witness* by Gary Tyra
Woodrow E. Walton
- 46 Review of *Early Libyan Christianity: Uncovering a North African Tradition* by Thomas C. Oden
Brendan Payne

- 48 Review of *The Women's Study Bible: New Living Translation* edited by Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans
Jennifer Creamer
- 49 Review of *How to Understand Your Bible* by T. N. Sterrett and R. L. Schultz
Shirley Barron
- 51 Review of *A Friendly Letter to Skeptics and Atheists* by David G. Myers and *Know Doubt* by John Ortberg
Benjamin B. DeVan
- 55 Review of *The Sacramental Church* by John Nash
Dean Borgman

Goals of the *Africanus Journal*

The *Africanus Journal* is an academic, multilingual journal. Its goals are to promote:

- a. the mission and work of the members and mentors of the Africanus Guild Ph.D. Research Program of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, based on the Boston campus (the Center for Urban Ministerial Education [CUME]).
- b. the principles of the Africanus Guild (evangelical orthodox Christian men and women who are multicultural, multiracial, urban-oriented, studying a Bible without error in a cooperative way).

Scholarly papers may be submitted normally by those who are in a Th.M., D.Min., Ph.D. program or have a Th.M., D.Min., Ph.D., Ed.D., or equivalent degree.

Current publications authored by professors and students of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston Campus (Center for Urban Ministerial Education) are featured interspersed throughout the journal.

<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/boston/africanusjournal>

© 2012 by the Africanus Guild

Life of Julius Africanus

Julius Africanus was probably born in Jerusalem, many scholars think around a.d. 200. Africanus was considered by the ancients as a man of consummate learning and sharpest judgment (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 6:128). He was a pupil of Heracles, distinguished for philosophy and other Greek learning, in Alexandria, Egypt around a.d. 231–233. In a.d. 220/226, he performed some duty in behalf of Nicopolis (formerly Emmaus) in Palestine. Later he likely became bishop of Emmaus (Eusebius, *History*, VI.xxxi.2). Origen calls him “a beloved brother in God the Father, through Jesus Christ, His holy Child” (*Letter from Origen to Africanus* 1). Fellow historian Eusebius distinguishes him as “no ordinary historian” (*History*, I. vi.2). Eusebius describes the five books of *Chronologies* as a “monument of labor and accuracy” and cites extensively from his harmony of the evangelists’ genealogies (*History*, VI. xxxi. 1–3). Africanus was a careful historian who sought to defend the truth of the Bible. He is an ancient example of meticulous, detailed scholarship which is historical, biblical, truthful, and devout.

Even though Eusebius describes Africanus as the author of the *Kestoi*, Jerome makes no mention of this (*ANF* 6:124). The author of *Kestoi* is surnamed Sextus, probably a Libyan philosopher who arranged a library in the Pantheon at Rome for the Emperor. The *Kestoi* was probably written toward the end of the 200s. It was not written by a Christian since it contains magical incantations (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri* III.412).

The Greek text of Africanus’ writings may be found in Martinus Josephus Routh, *Reliquiae sacrae* II (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974 [1846]), 225–309, and Martin Wallraff, Umberto Roberto, Karl Pinggéra, eds., William Adler, trans., *Julius Africanus Chronographiae: The Extant Fragments, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller* 15 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

The extant writings of Julius Africanus may be found in vol. 1, no 1, April 2009 edition of the *Africanus Journal*.

Other Front Matter

Editorial team

Jennifer Creamer, Mark Harden, Matthew Mascioli, Alvin Padilla, Seong Hyun Park, Nicole Rim, John Runyon, Patrick Smith, Aida Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer

Resources

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary faculty publications only may be obtained by calling 888-252-4287. Hard copies of this journal may be ordered from CUME: 617-427-7293.

Please note that each author is solely legally responsible for the content and the accuracy of facts, citations, references, and quotations rendered and properly attributed in the article appearing under his or her name. Neither Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, the Africanus Guild, nor the editorial team is responsible or legally liable for any content or any statements made by any author, but the legal responsibility is solely that author’s once an article appears in print in the *Africanus Journal*.

Summary of Content

This issue has articles related to mission and outreach, how God reached an intellectual in China, recommendations for understanding the “Word” in Chinese, the uniqueness of Jesus, how to grow, and a number of book reviews.



“I am eternally grateful to the Africanus Guild, which has helped me fulfill God’s call and realize a personal dream. I could not be working on my PhD in Old Testament without the financial help, prayers, and educational support I receive through the Guild.”

—QUONEKUIA DAY

Mentoring Scholars in a New Millennium

THE JULIUS AFRICANUS GUILD

was created at the Boston campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with the purpose of identifying and nurturing evangelical minority doctoral students with the potential to impact the global Body of Christ significantly through their scholarship.

The Guild exists as a Ph.D. research support and mentoring program in collaboration with schools such as London School of Theology in England. The context of the Guild is urban and multicultural with an emphasis on developing scholars who can address difficult issues facing the church today with a commitment to the inerrancy of Scriptures and the contextual application of the principles found therein.

PARTNER WITH US

Please partner with us to help PhD candidates from constituencies underrepresented in the academy prepare to teach God’s word in our increasingly multicultural urban centers.

Send your contribution to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Development Office, 130 Essex Street, South Hamilton, MA 01982. Please indicate in the memo: Africanus Guild Scholarship.

**Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary**



SOUTH HAMILTON | CHARLOTTE | BOSTON | JACKSONVILLE

THINK Theologically | ENGAGE Globally | LIVE Biblically

God's Amazing Work in China: My Personal Testimony¹

Kevin Xiyei Yao

Isaiah 9:2 says this: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (NIV). For many Chinese Christians, these words truly speak to their hearts, because that’s how God has led them to walk through suffering, hardship, and temptations to the truth and salvation in the land of promise and eternal life. I can personally testify to this experience shared by my fellow believers, since these biblical words always remind me of my own spiritual journey.

Thirty years ago, if there were people on earth who seem most unlikely to become Christians one day, I was certainly among them. I belonged to the generations in China who grew up under the shadow of the red flag. In the early years of their careers, my parents joined the communists and came to Beijing, the capital city of the People’s Republic of China, when the communists took over the country in 1949. My parents served the regime loyally as the very first generation of the communist ambassadors to South East Asia and later as the senior officials in cultural affairs. Not surprisingly, I was born and reared in a totally atheistic context. My father always reminded his seven children that we are a revolutionary family. To us, religion was dark, ugly, strange, superstitious, backward, and used as “the people’s opium,” as Karl Marx declared. Of all the religions, Christianity was especially notorious as the running dog of Western imperialism and capitalism. Since birth, we children were educated to be die-hard communists and were asked to devote our lives to the communist cause.

In the wake of the Great Culture Revolution, I entered the Nankai University in the year of 1980. That is the time when my communist faith began to be seriously challenged. As many young people of my age, I was shocked to find out that the Chinese economy was on the edge of collapse, and millions of people died due to political violence and massive starvation under the communist rule and to realize we had been deceived and brain-washed throughout all these years. My communist faith began to crumble. Along with many of my college students, I went through a period of faith crisis. The old foundation of life was shaken, and the familiar sense of belonging was also gone, so that my life was drifting without any direction. It was a very painful experience for myself and also for many of my classmates. We were desperately searching for a new foundation and direction for our own life and for the nation as well. That is also the time when the country had just begun to open its door to the outside world, and all kinds of worldviews and philosophies were pouring in from the West. We were hungry for new ideas and values, devouring all kinds of modern philosophical fads, such as existentialism, nihilism, etc., and we even tried psychoanalysis. Ironically, we had to pretend to be still loyal to the communist party simply because our future careers were entirely in the hands of the party. We lived a kind of double life. That certainly made our lives even more painful.

As a world history majoring undergraduate student, I noticed one semester that a new course was being offered by the history department: “History of Christianity.” Eager to learn new things, I decided to give that course a try. It turned out to be an eye-opening experience for me. It opened up a whole new horizon before my eyes. I felt I had entered a whole new world. And, for the first time in my life, I saw a whole new way of life, so different from the life with which I had been familiar, and my heart was deeply touched by it. At least some of the Christian teachings made much sense to me. I wanted to know more about this faith. That is why after completing my undergraduate

¹ This talk was presented April 11, 2012 at Dr. Yao’s installation convocation as Associate Professor of World Christianity and Asian Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, S. Hamilton, MA 01892.

studies, I enrolled in a Master of Arts program in Reformation study. In those early years, it was hard to get hold of a copy of the Bible. But, because of my academic area, I did have chances to read the Reformers' writings, especially Martin Luther's works. One of my favorite pieces was his *A Treatise on Christian Liberty*. I was shaken and overwhelmed by his sense of joy and peace, his insight into human nature, and his total reliance on God's grace. I liked him so much that I eventually wrote my M.A. thesis on Martin Luther.

Upon my completion of graduate studies, I took a job at the Institute of World Religions, at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in Beijing in 1987. That job afforded me more opportunities to read Christian writings that touched my heart and impacted my world view and my life. I found my personal interest in Christian faith continuing to grow. Throughout the years, my studies in Christianity were largely historical and cultural in nature. But I was having no chance to study what Christians actually believed. Of course, there was no way for the seminaries in China to accept someone like me. But I was eager to learn about this powerful faith.

My chance came in 1989. That year I was invited to do some research in America. Upon the completion of my research project, I decided to find a place to study theology. So I began to write letters to a number of seminaries in North America. Believe it or not, at least two seminaries eventually accepted me, a non-believer (or a seeker) to study with them. I later realized this was a decision made by them with great faith. The next two years I spent in a Mennonite seminary in the Midwest and these marked a turning point in my life. With the teaching and caring of the seminary community and a local congregation, I finally came face to face with the Lord and could not resist the power of His love and grace. In the spring of 1991, I confessed my sins and accepted Him as my personal savior in front of the congregation.

That was both the end of my spiritual search and the beginning of a new faith journey. I thank Jesus for his loving but firm hand, guiding me through the ups and downs in my life and leading me to discipleship and service in the mission fields.

Looking back, I am always amazed at how unconventional my conversion experience was, and how marvelous was God's leading in my life. Rather than by missionary contact, it was by the tremendous changes in my life and society that I became interested in this faith; rather than through the church's evangelistic outreach, I was led to know God and His work step by step through my academic studies, observations, and reflections. Yes, without the final push from the church, I would not have been able to make that final, personal decision. But, God had taken time to prepare my life throughout the years for that moment of decision without any direct assistance and involvement of the church. I realize that the special way God has led me was perhaps the only possible way in an overwhelmingly atheistic and tightly controlled society like China's in the 1980s. While the church in China at that time was still struggling for survival and had no energy for mission outreach, God found someone like me and would not let me go. Unusual, unconventional though it was, my spiritual journey does testify to His care, patience, and love. Even in the spiritual wasteland of communism and the Cultural Revolution, God's glory and sovereignty were still present. Yes, God can often be found in the unlikely places. Just as one writer puts it, "Jesus never left China."²

In many ways, my personal story is also the story of the generations of Chinese Christian intellectuals. My journey is quite typical of how God works in the lives of many Chinese college students and intellectuals, and leading them from despair to hope. Just as I, they find Christ in their studies and academic pursuits. Yes, God's work in China in the wake of the Cultural Revolution has been amazing and mind-boggling. Even before the church launched any new mission programs, God was already making a big difference in people's lives in every corner of the society. And this still continues to be the case in China today.

2 Werner Burklin, *Jesus Never Left China, the Rest of the Story: the Untold Story of the Church in China Now Exposed* (Enumclaw, WA: Pleasant Word, 2006), xvi.

From a young revolutionary to a Christian, from an atheist to a believer, and from a son of a former Chinese ambassador to an ambassador for Christ, I always feel overwhelmed by His grace, and ask why I have been so blessed. I know He called me for a purpose, and I never regret to having made a commitment to Him, even though it has meant a betrayal of my family tradition. It is my privilege to share with every reader God's work in my life. Let all of us God has encountered celebrate His wonderful presence and miracles in the life of each one of us so that His name be glorified. Amen.

Kevin Xiyi Yao is Associate Professor of World Christianity and Asian Studies. He has served as Associate Professor at the Chinese Graduate School of Theology in Hong Kong. He holds an M.A. from Nan Kai University, an M.T.S. from Associated Biblical Seminaries and a Th.D from Boston University School of Theology.

Critical Analysis of the Chinese Translation of *Logos* in the Gospel of John

Mark Chuanhang Shan ¹

In the commonly used Mandarin Union translation of the Bible, the word *logos*, used in John 1, is translated as *Dao* (道). Is this translation correct or not? This article begins by considering the concepts of contextualization and syncretization, pointing out that syncretism begins in Bible translation. Then, through discussion and comparison of the meanings of *logos* and *Dao*, and the problem the Chinese church faces as to whether or not Jesus Christ is the *Dao*, we address the issue of the appropriateness of *Dao* being used in the Bible, considering the deleterious consequences this translation has had on the Chinese church. This paper suggests that the correct Chinese translation of *logos* should be *li* (理) and emphasizes the urgent need for a revision of the Chinese translation of the Bible.

Thesis

Syncretism undermines the very kerygma of the Gospel of the Holy Bible, therefore, Christians need to know where and when syncretism starts. The first syncretism in regard to China may have appeared in Bible translation. Chinese Christians, then, must be careful to discern the wrong translation in the Chinese version of the Bible.

The main translation problem in the New Testament (NT) is the translation of *logos* in the Book of John. In John, *logos* is translated to be the *Dao* (or *tao*道) of Daosim. This is a serious mistake and is causing heresy among the Chinese at the present time. The same *Dao* shows up about 200 times in some translations of the NT. Together, these occurrences have enough power to syncretize the “Word” of God.

In the first part of this article, the meaning and application of *logos* is discussed. Since the NT is written in Greek, *logos* is a Greek philosophical term that means reason that controls the universe. It was used frequently by the Stoics. So, the Greek people knew that what it refers to is God or ultimate Truth. To Jewish people, because *logos* means “word” too, and the word was used frequently in the OT in relation to God’s commandments, so they tended to relate the Word to God.

In the second part of this article, the meaning and application of *Dao* is discussed. The *Dao* is from Daoism, which was founded by Lao Zi in ancient China, in its Spring and Autumn Period. The definition of *Dao* was first described in Lao Zi’s work—*Daodejing*. This is mainly a religious book and not a philosophy book.

In the third part of our study, the *Dao* and *logos* are compared. Though the verses about the definition of *Dao* in *Daodejing* have some similarity with the verses about *logos* in the Book of John, they are essentially different. Because of the translation of *Dao*, modern Chinese intellectual Christians begin to syncretize the kerygma of *logos* with the doctrine of Daoism and this leads to heresies.

In the fourth part, the Chinese word *li* (理) is recommended as the best translation of *logos*. Through the study of meaning and application of *li* in both modern and ancient Chinese language, I will prove that *li* means reason that controls the universe, providing order and judging it. If the character for “real” or “true” is placed before *li*, it will mean truth. *Li* has no religious background. Rather it is a pure philosophical and linguistic concept.

¹ This article develops an essay submitted (4/11/2003) for Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s Applied Anthropology for Missions class taught by Dr. Timothy Tennent. It was translated from the Chinese by Paul Niednagel. Acknowledgements also to Dr. Gwenfair Walters.

In conclusion, the Chinese Bible should be updated with the clarification of those questionable terms *Dao*, as well as *Shang Di* or *Shen* related to God, “faith”, etc. May a new version of the Chinese Bible be translated perfectly with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so as to bless billions of Chinese in this world.

Introduction: Contextualization and Syncretism

This topic reveals a sensitive issue which touches on the multiple fields of Christian theology, Chinese language, Chinese culture and religion (as well as empty ethnic pride). Because of this, the problem must be addressed by Chinese Christians, themselves. Even though Western missionaries have been in China for almost 200 years,² with the arrival of Robert Morrison in 1807, the growing Chinese church and its people must not set aside this responsibility, but must address this problem. May they have the strength to do so.

In the past thirty years, the theological study of contextualization has become more systematized.³ Research was developed from the foundation of the concept of indigenization.⁴ As these concepts have been broadly accepted by individuals and mission organizations, they have had a steadily increasing impact: the gospel has been more effectively communicated to other cultures, the global mission cause has developed and had a powerful effect. When the gospel encounters a new culture, both missionaries and local believers should make every effort to avoid syncretism in order to preserve the complete and pure *kerygma*. This difficult process was formerly known as indigenization and is now called contextualization. The gospel is for all humanity. It is for every part of the globe. It is supracultural.⁵

When the truth of the gospel comes into conflict with a receptor culture, we should not be surprised because Jesus said in Matthew 10:34-36: “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.”⁶ This statement of Jesus is an accurate prophecy of the conflict between the gospel *kerygma* and a receptor culture.

Yes, we hope that the whole world will accept the truth of Jesus Christ, but, when we ask people to accept it, we certainly do not want to sacrifice the *kerygma*. In light of this, we must remind ourselves throughout the mission process that we seek to contextualize, not syncretize. Our task is to transmit the gospel *kerygma*, but it is the Holy Spirit, God Himself, who enables them to accept it.

As we look at contextualization (indigenization) efforts in mission history, instances of syncretism have occurred, having greater or lesser effects on the gospel *kerygma*. A primary cause in these instances has been a confused notion of syncretism and contextualization on the part of the missionaries and/or the converts. This may happen, on the part of the missionary, because he lacks a full intellectual and spiritual understanding of the gospel, or the receptor's culture, religion, philosophy, politics, and society.⁷ On the part of the receptor group, they may be confused because they have no prior understanding of the gospel. Beyond this, they may not even have a correct intellectual and spiritual understanding of their own culture, religion, philosophy, politics, and society. Their narrow nationalistic or ethnic ideals may leave them unwilling to repent or cause them to refuse, or to accept only a part of, the gospel truth, syncretizing it with their own culture's

2 Jonathan Chao and Rosanna Chong, *A History of Christianity in Socialist China, 1949-1997* (Taipei, Taiwan: CMI Publishing Co., 1997), vii.

3 David J. Hesselgrave & Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000), 28-31.

4 Ibid., 33.

5 Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 80.

6 Scripture references will be from the NIV unless otherwise indicated.

7 Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, 80.

values. In other cases, there may be some sort of motive of worldly gain, or perhaps the missionary yields or compromises on certain points.

Another factor that cannot be ignored is a lack of communion with the Holy Spirit, whether it comes from a lack of belief in, or lack of sensitivity to, His leading. When conflicts and difficulties arise, if there is no means of seeking the correct answer from the Holy Spirit, it is easy to fall into error.

Syncretism among receptor cultures to the gospel can be devastating to contextualization efforts, and when those who are misled are believers, the very foundation of the church and its future theological developments are shifted, like a house built on the sand.

So, how does syncretism happen? There are many reasons and methods, and we will not consider them all here. However, I believe there is one very important reason which cannot be ignored. That is, at the beginning of a missionary endeavor, syncretism occurs in the process of Bible translation. Because it is a foreign language, usually, the bulk of the responsibility for the first Bible translation is taken on by foreign missionaries. Because of this, it is impossible to avoid significant occurrences of syncretism through choosing inadequate terms embedded in receptor religion and culture. Moreover, because this kind of syncretism is preserved in writing, written in the Bible itself, over time and through practice these errors become accepted as “truth.” The damage caused is difficult to measure because it continues for generations and is very difficult to undo, because it has already become an accepted custom.

We can find examples of such occurrences in Church history- where errors in Bible translation have led to syncretism, cults, and great harm to the Church. There is such an example in Western Church history. Matthew 4:17 says, “From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’” However, after A.D. 405,⁸ the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible used by the Roman Catholic Church translated “repent” as “do penance,” holding believers in the bondage of error for over 1000 years! It was not until the time of the Reformation when Lorenzo Valla corrected the error, and “Erasmus incorporated Valla’s rendering in his 1516 edition of the Greek New Testament.”⁹ This was also a critical basis for reformer Martin Luther’s criticism of the Roman Church. In another case, Luke 1:28, speaking of Mary, was incorrectly translated as “full of grace” rather than “highly favored.”¹⁰ We know that only God is truly full of grace, thus this error led to centuries of Mariolatry. The dangers of mistranslating Scripture are truly great!

In any receptor culture, some theological problems which result from syncretism will be worked out after several generations, but others will not. Syncretism caused by Bible translation falls into the latter category. Because of this, after the gospel has taken root in a new culture, it is crucial to update or re-translate the Bible. Before starting the re-translation process, areas that have led to syncretism should be identified so that the new version can address these errors. The result will be a “non-syncretized” contextualization.¹¹

As a Chinese Christian, I believe that there are several errors in the translation of the Chinese Bible which have shaken the *kerygma* and have caused great damage which must be addressed and corrected. The focus of this article is the translation of *logos* in John’s gospel. We will divide the following discussion into three sections. First we will examine the meaning of the Greek word *logos*. Then we will examine *Dao*, the word traditionally used to translate *logos*. Thirdly, we will discuss the word *li*, suggesting why *li* would be a superior translation of *logos* than *Dao*, avoiding the previous theological syncretism *Dao* as a translation has created.

8 Allen C. Myers, rev. ed., *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 1042.

9 Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1988), 48.

10 Dr. Gwenfair M. Walters, CH500: Survey of Church History, The Reformation, Class Handout of 18th March, 2003 (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary), 2.

11 Hiebert, *Reflections*, 101.

I. The Meaning of *Logos*

The original Greek of John 1:1–4 says, “In the beginning was the Word (*logos*), and the *logos* was with God and the *logos* was God. He was in the beginning with God. Through him all things were made, and without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of humans.” John 1:14 says, “The *logos* became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

In John 1:1-18, the central truth is that the *logos* is Jesus Christ Himself. In Greek, the literal meaning of *logos* is “what is spoken,” or “Word,”¹² or “the unspoken word, the word still in the mind—the reason.”¹³ In the cultural context in which John’s gospel was written, *logos* was a philosophical term, meaning “the rational principle that governs all things.”¹⁴ In English, a good approximation of this word is “reason.” However, “Word,” used in the English translation, is a direct representation of the literal meaning of *logos*. Because it is capitalized, the reader will recognize this is not merely a “word.” Instead, it must have special significance, and, as such, it becomes biblical nomenclature to represent *logos*.

Why did the author of John’s gospel choose to use *logos*, which carries heavy associations with Greek philosophy? Because, since it was written in Greek, to both Greek and Jewish readers, it was important to find a word that readers from both language groups could understand. The *logos spermatikos* was widely used by Greek philosophers.¹⁵ According to the sixth century B.C. Greek philosopher Heraclitus, *logos* is almost an equivalent for “God,”¹⁶ and Platonist thinkers considered *logos spermatikos* “was an ethical principle that sowed the foundational seeds for human ethics.”¹⁷ The Stoics also used *logos*. They believed that the universe was governed by reason, which they called *logos*. But, in their view, *logos* did not have an independent existence.¹⁸ Acts 17:18 records a discussion between the Apostle Paul and some Stoic philosophers, showing that this school of philosophy was well known and influential at the time. Because of this, a Greek reader could easily grasp the meaning of *logos*.

Jews at that time were not unfamiliar with the word *logos* because of the rule of the hellenistically based Roman Empire. Beyond this, their Scriptures frequently referred to God’s “Word.” For example:

“...for they had rebelled against the *words* of God and despised the counsel of the Most High.” (Ps 107:11)

“You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your *word*.” (Ps 119:114)

“My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your *promises* (i.e. words).” (Ps 119:148)

Beyond this, the first chapter of Genesis reveals that God created the heavens and the earth by His Word. Because of this, for Jews, God’s “Word” was used in many places to represent God Himself.¹⁹ This is a simple concept for the Chinese to grasp. In ancient China, in every dynasty, the “decree” of the emperor and his written word represented the emperor himself and all his authority. Because of this, in Chinese history, there are several examples of ambassadors clandestinely changing an imperial decree and accomplishing amazing things.

12 William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 19.

13 *The NIV Study Bible*, 1593.

14 Ibid.

15 Timothy C. Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Round Table* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 200.

16 Leon Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John*, Volume 1, *The Word Was Made Flesh, John 1-5* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986), 2-3.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 2-3.

19 Ibid., 3-4.

It can be seen that readers from both Greek and Hebrew backgrounds would have understood that *logos* referred to God. *Logos* is Jesus Christ Himself, and Jesus Christ is God incarnate. At the same time, we can see that the New Testament considers both Jewish and Greek readers.

From the first chapter of John, we learn that *logos*, is God's only Son Jesus Christ. However, the Mandarin translation does not use "word" to represent *logos*, because Mandarin has no phonetic alphabet and cannot distinguish between upper and lower case letters. If the word "word" were to be used, the reader would most likely be puzzled. At the same time, in Mandarin, "word" only means "word" and does not imply "reason" or "the Fundamental, ruling principle."

The Mandarin Union Version is the most widely used colloquial Mandarin translation of the Bible today. It was completed in the beginning of the 20th century by American missionaries from a consortium of mission organizations, along with the help of American linguists and Chinese scholars.²⁰ Reading this translation today, one senses a powerful testimony to God's awesome works when one considers that such an accurate translation was achieved under such conditions. Although it may not be perfectly smooth, the meaning is clear and powerful and over all it maintains the beauty of the text. As a result, it became a pioneer of colloquial Chinese literature.

In the Mandarin Union Version of the Bible, *logos* is translated as *Dao*,²¹ a word which occurs 200 times. So, what is the meaning of *Dao*? Is this an appropriate translation? Let us carefully consider this question.

II. The Meaning of *Dao*

The character *Dao* in Mandarin means "way" or "speech." For instance, we might say, "This is a narrow *path*, using the character *Dao* for path. This character also occurs in the words for "road" and "shortcut." The phrases used to express the ideas of "a good speaker," an "ancient Chinese proverb," and "goodbye," all use the character *Dao* to express the concept of speech. These two meanings are common in both modern spoken and written Mandarin.

However, in Mandarin, *Dao* is also a religious term, meaning the *Dao* spoken of in the Daoist religion. This meaning has profoundly affected the Mandarin language. So, in order to understand this meaning of *Dao*, it is necessary to understand Daoism. That is to say, how does Daoism define the character, *Dao*?

Daoism was formed by the writings of Lao-zi, *Daodejing*, and of Zhuang-zi, *Zhuangzi*, in the Spring-Autumn period, around the same time that Confucius was establishing his ethical philosophy. The *Daodejing* is the Daoist scripture and it deals with issues of life, nature, metaphysics, politics, military engagement, and the practice of Qi-gong. In Daoism, the highest realm is *Dao*, and becoming one with the *Dao*, gaining immortality and becoming divine. (The *Daodejing* is also the scripture for Qi-gong and Kung-fu and the Daoist training method which is based on meditating in the lotus position. During the 1980-1990's, Qi-gong was the largest and fastest growing religion in China, and Falun Gong is one branch of it. Qi-gong belongs to the realm of evil spirits power practice).²²

Let us consider Laozi's explanation of *Dao* in chapter 25 of *Daodejing*: "There was something undifferentiated which has existed before the heaven and earth were formed. It is hard to describe its features, but it is silent and empty, independent and never changing. It does not have a beginning or end, but [is] moving in endless cycles, and is everlasting. This thing is the origin of everything in the universe. I do not know its name, and call it *dao*."²³

20 Marshall Broomhall, *The Bible in China* (London: China Inland Mission, The Religious Tract Society, 1934), 91-97.

21 Chinese Union Version Bible, New Testament (Nanjing City, China: Amity Publishing Co., China Christian Council, 1998), 104.

22 Hsiao-guang, *Breaking Through the Dark Spirit World: Unveiling the Secrets of Qi-gong* (Taipei, Taiwan: CMI Publishing Co., 2000), 165-172.

23 There was "something" present before the cosmos took form, and it is indescribable, other than that it is

In chapter 42, Laozi further explained the logic of *Dao* being the source of all things by saying, “dao give birth to one, one to two, two to three, and three to everything.” This reasoning uses very simple, but very abstract, logic. To illustrate this teaching, Daoism uses the *Yin-yang* symbol. The entire circle represents *Dao*, the two half round sections represent *Yin* (darkness) and *Yang* (light). The *Yin* and the *Yang* are complementary and within the circle they are constantly renewed, never-ending. This picture represents the meaning of *Dao* and has become the symbol of Daoism.



Lao-tzu believed that people should pursue the realm of *Dao*, that is, the realm of nothingness. The realm of nothingness/oneness means “God and man become one,” “I and *Dao* become one,” and “I” equals “*Dao*,” and therefore, “*Dao*” equals “I.” Although Laozi called *Dao* the source of everything, he believed, “*The dao that can be told is not the eternal Dao. The name that can be named is not the eternal Name.*” (See the first chapter of *Daodejing*.²⁴)

Many western scholars believe that the *Daodejing* is primarily a work of philosophy, but it is actually a concrete manual for the practice of religion, or at least a systematic religious philosophy. While it does touch on the governmental and philosophical foundation for this practice, its concepts and methods are primarily derived from religious experience. The focus of the whole book is to understand *Dao* and to revere and follow the principles, logic, discipline and lifestyle of *Dao*. Finally, its goal is that one could achieve *Dao* and gain supernatural powers and immortality, becoming one with *Dao* and using it in every aspect of life, making the practitioner capable of anything. Lao-tzu believed that *Dao* is a supernatural force which created the earth and the source of all things. The highest goal in life was to achieve *Dao*, and those who were able to master it were called “holy men.”

If we look at this book in terms of its religious content and practical instruction for spiritual disciplines, we will discover that the 81 chapters of the *Dao te Ching* can be divided into four sections in terms of its content: The first is the definition and understanding of *Dao* (chs. 4, 17, 18, 25, 32, 34, 35, 40, 41, 42, 51, 62, 73, 77). The second contains concrete methods of discipline through specific martial arts forms (for example, chs. 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 16, 21) and principles for daily living (chs. 8, 12, 13, 15, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 28, 33, 38, 39, 44, 45, 52, 56, 63, 64, 67, 71). The third section describes the various evidences and manifestations of achieving *Dao* (chs. 7, 16, 27, 43, 46-50, 55, 77). The fourth section describes the use of *Dao* in the process of personal sanctification, daily living, politics, and military matters (chs. 2, 3, 9, 11, 22, 27, 29-31, 36, 37, 53, 54, 57-61, 65, 66, 68, 69, 72, 74-76, 78-80). Beyond this, Lao-tzu also included a personal evaluation (chs. 70, 81). In several chapters the different themes overlap and occur together.

From the above discussion, it can be seen that in terms of religious content, the *Daodejing* is very similar to the New Testament, because the New Testament deals with the following major themes: first, concerning the knowledge of Jesus Christ; second, the practical application of the

unchanging, it has no beginning or end, and it is forever returning to where it came. This “something” is the source of everything in the universe and since I don’t know what to call it, I call it, Dao. Cited from English version of Hsiao-guang’s “Breaking Through the Barriers of Darkness: Recognizing the Cult of Qigong for What It Is,” translated by Leanne Luo; www.chinaforjesus.com. Chapter 5: 4. Qigong and Daosim, the present writer of the paper edited the translation of chapter 25 of *Daodejing*.

24 Stephen Mitchell, *Dao Te Ching, A New English Version* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1988), ch. 1.

religion (prayer, gathering for worship, reading the Bible, baptism, and communion) as well as the principles for daily living; third, the evidences and manifestations of achieving this belief, and, the fourth, its use in the process of personal sanctification. But, the important difference is that the New Testament does include prophecies, and the *Daodejing* does not.

So, the *Dao te Ching* is an unequivocally religious work, but this can only be clearly perceived through its instructions on personal discipline, training in *qi-gong*, and its principles for daily living. Through these, it created the oldest, indigenous formal religion in Chinese history, but by the 1990s there were only 1557 Daoist temples in the entire nation, two seminaries, and 25,700 full time Daoist workers, with no clear figures for the number of believers. In contrast, there are about 12,000 Christian churches, 17 seminaries, over 18,000 pastors and ministers²⁵ (the house church movement is not counted in the data) but no exact figures for the number of believers.

Daoism still has an undeniable impact on China today. Of the five approved religions, it is the only one that is indigenous. In official literature, the five are listed in this order: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Roman Catholicism, and Protestant Christianity. Since Daoism is listed second,²⁶ in Chinese culture, this indicates that the government holds it in higher esteem than those listed third, fourth, and fifth.

III. A Comparison of the Meanings of *Dao* and *Logos*

From the discussions above we learn that *Dao* in the *Dao te Ching* and *logos* in Greek philosophy differ in the following way: *logos* is a philosophical term and *Dao* is a religious term. This difference is readily apparent. However, the problem hinges on the fact that after its use in the Gospel of John *logos* became a religious term, signifying Jesus Christ Himself. According to the definition and understanding of *Dao* provided in the *Dao te Ching*, the two have startling similarities. This is why some Chinese Christians believe the *Dao te Ching* is actually speaking of Jesus Christ. We need to consider this problem very carefully. Please see below:

The *Daodejing* 25:1-4 says: “There was something undifferentiated which has existed before the heaven and earth were formed. It is hard to describe its features, but it is silent and empty, independent and never changing. It does not have a beginning or end, but moving in endless cycles, and is everlasting. This thing is the origin of everything in the universe. I do not know its name, and call it *dao*.”

John 1:1-4 says: “In the beginning was the *logos* and the *logos* was with God and the *logos* was God. He was in the beginning with God. Through him all things were made, and without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life and that life was the light of humans.” Through this first chapter of John, we learn that *logos* is none other than Jesus Christ Himself.

So, the question facing us is: “Is the *Dao* in the *Daodejing* the same as the *logos* in the Gospel of John?” Or, “Is *Dao* actually speaking of Jesus Christ?” Before entering fully into this discussion, we need to lay down certain principles which will be used in the evaluation process.

In *Christianity at the Religious Round Table*, Dr. Timothy C. Tennent addresses the problem of the similarities and differences between the Christian concept of *God* and the Muslim concept of *God* (Allah). Are they or are they not the same God? In this process, he raises three bases for making such a judgment: the linguistic level, the revelational level, and the positional level. The first is that, from a linguistic perspective, the answer is affirmative; the second is that, in terms of revelation, the different characteristics of the two “Gods” are similar but different; the third is that, in terms of the position and identity of believers in the two religions before their God, the answer is completely negative. The conclusion is that the two are not the same God.²⁷

²⁵ Li Pingye, The United Front Ministry of CCP, *A Report on the Development of Religion in China in the 1990's*, from *Journal for the Study of Christian Culture*, Volume II, by Christianity Culture Research Institute, China People's University (Beijing: People's Daily Press, 1999), 202-203.

²⁶ Ibid., 202.

²⁷ Tennent, *Round Table*, 204-208.

These three principles for judgment are very illuminating, but we can also consider the question of God's position and by this determine whether or not we are speaking of the same or different gods. In Christianity, God is positioned in Jesus Christ. In Islam, God's position is defined through Mohammed. In Buddhism, Siddhartha defines the concept of god, and we can see that each of these positions is different so they are clearly not speaking about the same god. Now, let us use these three bases to determine whether or not *Dao* in the *Daodejing* is speaking of the same thing as *logos* in the Gospel of John.

1. Linguistics Level: Linguistically speaking, the primary meanings of *logos* are “word, logic, and the universal governing principle.” The primary meanings of *Dao* are “way, speech, and the force that is the source of all things.” It appears that the two definitions have similarities.

2. Revelational Level: The Gospel of John says: “In the beginning was the *logos*, ... by the *logos* all things were created,” and the *Daodejing* says, “There was something... which has existed before the heaven and earth were formed . . . This thing is the origin of everything in the universe.” These two statements have similarities. John also says, “*logos* was with God and *logos* was God.” Here the *logos* has a very clear personality which is God Himself. In contrast, the *Daodejing* says: “It is hard to describe its features, but it is silent and empty, independent and never changing.” These three phrases describe an unclear and abstract image without a clear identity, personality, or form. Most clearly, it is “silent and empty.” This explains that *Dao* is an immaterial and indescribable supernatural force. More importantly, the fourth chapter says: “I do not know who gave birth to it. It is older than God.” This means, “I don't know where *Dao* came from, but it must have existed before God.” This explains that, in Lao-tzu's understanding, the beginning and end of the universe is *Dao* and not God. At the same time, he is guessing at what might have existed before *Dao*, but he has no answer.

3. Positional Level: In terms of identity, John says, “The *logos* was in the beginning with God ... [John] came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light... And the *logos* became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (NASB John 1: 2, 7, 14). So, through John and God's definition, we can see that the *logos* is none other than Jesus Christ, God's only Son. The *Daodejing* says: “There was something undifferentiated . . . It is hard to describe its features, but it is silent and empty . . . I do not know its name, and call it *Dao*.” Also, the first chapter says: “The *Dao* that can be told is not the eternal *Dao*. The name that can be named is not the eternal Name.” This means that *Dao* cannot be spoken of clearly. Chapter 32 also says, “*Dao Chang Wu Ming*,” which means “*Dao* is nameless generally.” This clearly demonstrates that there is no clear definition or position of *Dao*. The fourth chapter also says: “I do not know who gave birth to it. It is older than God.” This definition is clearly in complete conflict with John's statement that “the *logos* was with God . . . the glory of the only begotten of the Father.” There is another very important point to consider. John emphasizes the fact that “the *logos* became flesh and dwelt among us.” In contrast, Daoist discipline emphasizes “flesh became *Dao*.” These two are in complete opposition.

The evaluation presented above brings us to this conclusion: *Dao* as it is used in the *Dao te Ching* is not equivalent to *logos* as it is used in the Gospel of John. Said another way, the *Dao* is in no way Jesus Christ.

IV. Syncretism Caused by Translating *Logos* as *Dao*

The use of *Dao* to translate *logos* is syncretistic and has had a negative effect on contextualization efforts in the Chinese culture. During the first century of the use of the Mandarin Union Version, this effect was not obvious because most believers during this period were not highly educated. But since the 1980s Christianity has grown rapidly in Mainland China and many intellectuals have accepted the gospel. As a result, indigenous theologizing began. Since Daoist

culture is prevalent in the Chinese language, the concept of *logos* was syncretized to the concept of *Dao* leading to several absurd conclusions. For instance, one Christian scholar said, “Laozi was speaking of the Holy One, the incarnation of the *Dao* (Jesus Christ) when he wrote of *Dao* in the *Daodejing* and as such it is holy revelation,” “God enlightens Laozi and Laozi sees the Holy One . . .” and “Laozi and Isaiah simultaneously point out the Holy One who would practice the heavenly *Dao* on earth,” etc.²⁸ As a result, some believe that God’s revelation about Jesus Christ did not come only through the Jewish Old Testament Scriptures, but also through the Chinese *Daodejing*. This is a ridiculous conclusion, lacking a biblical view of history and the world and demonstrating a deficient personal faith. Such a conclusion belongs to postmodern liberal theological thinking, which depends on materialistic, atheistic, and relativist methods. However, such thinking and its theory has had a broad effect on the church in Mainland China as well as on the overseas Chinese church. Heresy often spreads more quickly than truth.

The logic of these Christians is based on similar content, but this does not meet the muster of scholarly reasoning. We know that there is a great distance between “similar” and “same.” If we speak of “similar,” the Qur’an has similarities to the Christian Bible. But the Qur’an is not the same as God’s revelation.

Since the 1990s, Mainland China has seen the development of three major Christian cults: *Dao* Becoming Flesh, Eastern Lightning, and Three Classes Servants.²⁹ These three, as well as innumerable smaller cults, have done great damage to the Church, especially because of the effect they have had on the Church’s reputation in society.

As the Church and various Christian scholars have sought to understand the causes and results of these cults, no clear conclusions have been reached. Actually, each of them began when the gospel was preached in a new area and it was misunderstood by certain individuals and heavily syncretized with traditional religions. There are early examples of this in Chinese Church history as indicated by the Nestorian Stele. When Nestorian Christians came to China after the Tang dynasty, certain Christian teachings were syncretized with Buddhist and Daoist teachings, such that “Buddha” was used to speak of God and *Dao* was used to represent the whole of the Christian teaching.³⁰ In more recent Chinese history, the clearest example is found in the Taiping Rebellion. The founder, Gong Xiu-quan, happened to see the gospel pamphlet *Golden Words to Advise the World*, by Liang-fa (the first Protestant Christian and pastor in modern Chinese history). As a result of his incomplete understanding of this text, he founded the “Worship God Society” and eventually led the Taiping Rebellion which almost overthrew the Qing dynasty.³¹

Today, Daoism is a religion in decline in China, but Daoist philosophy has already penetrated deep into the Chinese language and has imperceptibly affected people’s worldview, especially in the farming villages. Some believe that the Christian cult *Dao* Becoming Flesh has been affected by Buddhist influences,³² which is certainly true. However, from this cult’s concept of “flesh becoming *Dao*,” we can see that the greater influence is still from Daoism. The highest goal of Daoist training is *tian ren he yi*, which means “heaven and man united as one”; *ren dao he yi*, means, “man and *Dao* united as one”; *dao cheng rou shen*, means “*Dao* becoming flesh”; *de dao sheng tian*, means “man ascending to heaven by getting *Dao*.” The whole idea of these is to live eternally and gain the powers of the divine. In China, the well-known folk legend *Eight Immortals Cross the Sea* is

28 Yuan Zhiming (远志明), *Laozi and Christ* 《老子与基督, Volume I, *Daodejing Is the Work of Divine Revelation* (Beijing: China Social Science Press (中国社会科学出版社), 1997), 18-27; *Lao Tzu and the Bible*, trans. Chen Shangyu (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010), 226-27.

29 Jonathan Chao, *Discerning Truth from Heresies: A Critical Analysis of the Alleged and Real Heresies in Mainland China* (Taipei, Taiwan: Christianity and China Research Center, 2001), foreword.

30 Gu Weiming, *A Brief History of the Indigenization of Roman Catholicism in China*, from *Journal for the Study of Christian Culture*, Volume II (Beijing: People’s Daily Press, 1999), 287.

31 Wang Zhongxin, ed., *Christianity and the Pluralistic China* (Ontario: Christian Communication, 2001), 12.

32 Ibid., 79.

the best example. In the legend, eight people (seven men and one woman), through self-discipline, achieved oneness with *Dao* and became immortal divines. They proved this by departing from Peng-lai in Shandong province and crossing the sea.

But why would this cult use this concept? The hymn “Flesh Becomes Dao,” written on Dec 16, 1990 by Mao Shi-zhen, gives us some insight into the issue. The hymn mentions the Daoism concept of “heaven and man united as one.”³³ From this, we can infer that the Mandarin version of John 1:14, “The *Dao* became flesh...” gave rise to Mr. Mao’s erroneous thinking. He took the Daoist concept of “human becoming divine” and connected it with the biblical concept of “word made flesh,” yielding a syncretistic error which produced a Christian cult laced with Daoist and Buddhist teaching. One of the main reasons for this is using the Daoist technical term *Dao* to translate *logos*.

In conclusion, using *Dao* to translate *logos* in the Mandarin Bible is an error. This is a Daoist religious word that has blatant, pagan religious content and spiritual background which cannot be separated from it. It would be similar to using *dharma* from Buddhism to represent *logos*. If you accept the use of *Dao* as a correct translation and come from the perspective of liberal theology, you will naturally assume that *Dao* is Jesus Christ, a completely erroneous conclusion! The fact that *Dao* occurs 200 times in the New Testament has caused it to be powerfully used in syncretism. As a result, this translational syncretism has robbed Jesus of His divinity and personality, and it continues to damage the immature Chinese church and theology and misguide individual Christians in their faith. Like yeast in a lump of dough, it should be immediately apparent.

So, what should the correct translation be?

V. The Use of *Li*

First, it is necessary to say that to criticize a translation of the Bible is not to attack the authority of the Bible. On the contrary, it is for the very purpose of protecting the authority of the Bible that we need to criticize the translation. Because the translation using *Dao* has already given rise to serious syncretistic errors, we are forced to search for a more appropriate translation and this is not such a difficult endeavor.

So, what should the Mandarin translation of the word *logos* be? The writer believes that *li* would be the most accurate and powerful translation.

First, let us consider the meaning of *li* (理): The literal meaning of *li* is reason, logic, standard, principle, and *logos* has a similar meaning. In Mandarin, the use of *li* is common and significant. For example, the words for reason out or infer, philosophical, understand, reasonable, rationality, theory, and principle all contain the character, *li* (哲理、推理、理解、合理、理性、原理、理论).

The next deeper level of the meaning of *li* includes the standard of righteousness, law, and morality. *Logos* also has these meanings. For example, the Chinese phrase, “He doesn’t speak *li*,” means his speech violates the rules of logic and expresses his meaning poorly. Another Chinese saying, *gong li he zai* (公理何在), indicates that *li* represents the standard of rightness. We also say, *tian li bu rong* (天理不容), which means “very unjust,” which is another example of *li* indicating righteousness. Another phrase, *li ying ru ci* (理应如此), means “that is the way it should be.”

We can see that *li* is used to speak of human reason and conscience as well as the standard for the world and the rule of existence. In all of this, it is still a purely philosophical term. At this point its meaning is an appropriate parallel to *logos*. If we want to explain this in Mandarin, we must use *li* in the explanation. This is why we use *li* to say “axiom, logical fallacy, heavenly reason, geography, physics and reason” (公理、歪理、天理、地理、物理、道理). The word for “reason” or “rationality” actually is the combination of *Dao* and *li*. This shows that *Dao* must actually rely on *li* to be properly understood. The literal meaning of *dao li* 道理 (reason or rationality) is actually “the logic of *Dao*” (道之理).

33 Chao, *Discerning Truth*, 79-80.

In ancient Chinese usage, we can also see that *li* has some exciting uses. For example, *Lu Shi Chun Qiu* 《吕氏春秋·劝学》 says: “*Sheng ren zhi suo zai, ze tian xia li yan*” (圣人之所以在, 则天下理焉), which means, “If there is a saint, the world will be in order and harmony.” Here, *li* is used to signify “the meaning of governing authority.”³⁴ Jesus Christ is the governing authority of the whole universe!

Guan Zi; *Xiao Kuang* 《管子·小匡》 says, “*Xuan zi qi wei li*” (弦子旗为理). The meaning here is that of a tribunal or court of law.³⁵ This is exciting because Jesus is the final judge of all humanity.

Zhuang Zi Autumn Water says “*shi wei ming tian di zhi li, wan wu zhi qing jie ye*” (是未明天地之理, 万物之情者也), which means, “the reason of the cosmos is unknown as is the state of the material world.” In the Song Dynasty, Wang Ah-Shi’s *Da Ci Ma Lian Yi Shu* says, “The *li* we have gained from heaven governs all.”³⁶ Here, *li* is the governing principle of the cosmos, which is a close parallel to the meaning of *logos* in Greek philosophy.

The most exciting use of *li* is when it is combined with *zhen* (真), which means true and real. Together, *zhen-li* (真理) means, “the truth,” and we know from Scripture that Jesus is the Truth, and *logos* is Jesus. In John 14:6, Jesus says, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.”

Based on the above discussion of *li*, we can see that it is a philosophical term and does not have the type of spiritual and religious background that we see with *Dao*. In this way it is similar to *logos* which does not have a religious background, but rather is also a philosophical term. This means that *li* can be like *logos* in that it is made religious by its “Christianization” in the Book of John. This is important because we know that the Bible is God’s revelation, and, as such, John’s use of *logos* in his gospel cannot be in error. This means that John’s use of *logos*, a non-religious term, was what God felt was most appropriate. So, when *logos* is translated into other languages, it is only reasonable to choose a word which has a literal meaning similar to *logos*, but which does *not* have a background as a religious term. From this perspective, *li* is a better translation than *Dao*.

Another important factor to consider is that, in ancient literature, *Dao* simply meant “road” until Laozi gave it Daoist significance. For example, *Yi-lu* 《易·履》 says, “*dao tan tan*” (道坦坦), which means, “the road is flat.” *Shuo wen* 《说文》 says, “*dao, suo xing dao ye*” (道, 所行道也), which means, “*Dao* is the road on which we walk.” *Er-ya* 《尔雅》 says, “*yi da wei zhi dao*” (一达谓之道), which means, “*Dao* is the shortest distance between two points.” *Shan hai Ching: Hai wai Bei Ching* 《山海经·海外北经》 says, “*dao ke er si*” (道渴而死), which means “dying of thirst on the road.”³⁷ When we get to the time of Laozi, we can still see this clearly. For example, in Confucius’ *Lun yu*; *yang huo* 《论语·阳货》, the phrase *dao ting er tu shuo* (道听而途说) means, “I have heard it said on road” showing that the meaning of *Dao* is road. In the meantime, the meaning of *Dao* used in *Daodejing* began to appear. For example, in Mencius and *Gong Sun-chou Xia* 《孟子·公孙丑下》 we read “*de dao duo zhu, shi dao gua zhu*” (得道多助, 失道寡助).

This means “(those who) gained *Dao* will be supported but (those who) lost the *Dao* will be less supported.” In the Han Dynasty, the influence of Daoism began to spread,³⁸ so the Daoist use of *Dao* is commonly seen. For example, in the *Chen She Shi Jia* 《史记·陈涉世家》 chapter of *Shi-Ji*, Chen Shen and Wu Guang say “*fa wu dao, zhu bao qing*” (伐无道, 诛暴秦). This means that, because of the immoral (without *Dao*) government, the *Qing* dynasty should be overthrown. In the Tang Dynasty, Han Yu, in his work *Hua Shan Nu* 《华山女》, says, “*hao jia shao nian qi zhi dao*,”³⁹ *lai rao bai zha jiao bu ting*” (豪家少年岂知道, 来绕百匝脚不停). This means that wealthy children

34 Definition of *li*, *Jin Shan Ci Ba Electronical Dictionary* (Beijing: Kingsoft Co., Beijing University Press, 1999).

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Daniel L. Overmyer, *Religions of China: The World as a Living System* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1998), 35-37.

do not know the way (*dao*), so they wander in the mountains. In *Shi Shuo* 《师说》, one of Han Yu's better known works, he says, "*shi zhe suo yi chuan dao shou ye jie huo ye*" (师者, 所以传道授业解惑也), which means, "The teacher's responsibility is to teach *Dao*, train in the knowledge and skills of business and answer difficult questions."⁴⁰

From the investigation described above, we can see that it is only through the rise of Daoism that people gradually began to use *Dao* for the meaning that had originally been carried by *li*, and, as a result, weakened the meaning of *li*. For instance, the word *zhi-dao* (知道), "to know", should originally have been *zhi-li* (知理). People often say *you dao-li* (有道理) to mean "it is reasonable," but it is also common to hear simply *you li* (有理) - the meaning of both is the same - but it is almost certain that *you li* was the original form. Through the influence of Daoism, words such as the following appeared in Chinese: *dao-de* 道德 (morality), *dao-xing* 道行 (one's level of advancement in *dao*), *jiang-dao* 讲道 (to preach), *bu-dao* (sermon) 布道, *mo gao yi chi, dao gao yi zhang* 魔高一尺, 道高一丈 (if the devil is powerful, *Dao* is much more powerful), *da dao tian ji* 大道天机 (*Dao* is the secret of heaven) and many others. In contrast, the meaning of *li* has not changed since ancient times. Beyond the examples listed above, another is found in Liu Zhong-Yuan's *Song Xue Cun Yi Xu* 《送薛存义序》 from the Song Dynasty: *shi bu ton er li tong* (势不同而理同). This means, "The circumstances are different, but the principle is the same." This is consistent with Liu Kai's *Wen Shuo* 《问说》 from the Ching Dynasty, which says: *li wu zhuan zai* (理无专在), meaning "*Li* is everywhere."⁴¹

Finally, there is one more point we must not ignore. Although "word" or "speech" is not included in the literal meaning of *li*, in common parlance, *li* can be spoken. The true *li* fills everything and all true words and speech must contain *li*. That is to say that *li* is the heart and soul of speech as indicated in the phrases *jiang li* 讲理 (to speak sensibly), *shuo li* 说理 (to talk sensibly) and *bu jiang li* 不讲理 (to speak nonsense). After listening to an oral presentation we might express our opinion by saying, "The speech had *li* (solid reasoning) and this is the *li* (the meaning) which I understood."

In summary, we can draw the following conclusion: Whether we approach this from a linguistic or philosophical perspective, *li* is the best translation for *logos*. Even if we disregard the religious and philosophical considerations, from a purely linguistic perspective, *li* and not *Dao* is the closest match for *logos*. As a result, *Dao* is not *zhen-li* (truth). Rather, the *logos* Jesus Christ is the *zhen-li* (truth).

Below, let us look at John 1:1-3, 14, replacing *Dao* with *li* and seeing the difference: "In the beginning was the *li* (理), the *li* was with God and the *li* was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made." "The *li* became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

If new Mandarin Bible translations replace *Dao* with *li*, it will require 200 changes in the biblical text, as well as numerous changes in religious and theological terminology. For instance, *dao xue* 道学 (the study of divinity) could become *shen xue* 神学, which currently means "theology." *Shen xue* (theology) could then be changed to *li xue* 理学 (leology). *Jiang dao* 讲道 (preach) could be changed to *xuan li* 宣理, etc.

Afterword

Although the use of *Dao* is the most serious cause of syncretism in today's commonly used Mandarin Union Bible translation there are a number of others as well. For example, *shen* 神, the character for "god," is not correct because it implies the existence of many "gods." The characters

40 The *Dao* has both meaning of "road" literally and "Dao" of *Daodejing*.

41 Ibid.

shang-di 帝 are more appropriate and should be used instead. Actually, during the 19th century, debate over the use of *shen*, *shang-di*, and *tian-zhu* 天主 raged for quite some time among western missionaries.⁴² Because of this, three different versions were published, each using a different word.⁴³ In China, the Nanjing Amity publisher's printing of the Mandarin Union version is the most common today and it uses the character *shen*. At the beginning of this version, there is a translation note stating: "This version uses the character *shen*. In every location where this character occurs, the character *shang-di* can be substituted."⁴⁴

In addition, the present writer believes that the translation of "faith" as *xin-xin* 信心 (sometimes just *xin* 信) is not appropriate. There is no single word in Mandarin which completely represents the meaning of "faith." In the Mandarin Union version, the use of simply *xin* 信 is faithfully accurate, but it lacks literary sophistication and elegance. Perhaps, *xin* 信 could be combined with another character to yield a more accurate and aesthetically pleasing alternative.

In conclusion, because of the complexity of the Chinese language, especially the short history of colloquial, spoken Mandarin (the common speech in Mainland China is simpler than what the Chinese uses in Hong Kong or Taiwan), it is important that the Chinese Bible translation retains a solid foundation in its knowledge of classical Chinese. Western missionaries have already translated the Bible into Chinese. They have exerted great effort and they have done an admirable job in completing their work. However, we must also admit that the overall literary quality of the Chinese Bible is weak. It lacks the literary force and elegance that the English Bible has in English culture. The written level of the Chinese Bible does not hold an honorable place in Chinese literature. As a result, in China today, where many more intellectuals are becoming Christians, they are beginning to feel and express dissatisfaction with the translation.⁴⁵ Now, since the Chinese church is already independent and does not lack those with the skills to take on this task, Chinese believers should take upon themselves the task of revising the translation of the Bible. This is the irrefusable call of the disciple, it is an urgent need, and it is an attainable goal.

Finally, let us unite in prayer in the hope that Jesus Christ will soon open the way for a new Chinese translation of the Bible, and that the Holy Spirit will guide so that God the Father may be pleased with the work of translation. As a result it will be more effective in the salvation and the blessing of the Chinese who are fully one fifth of the world's entire population.

Mark Chuanhang Shan, from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China, has written a number of books and articles, including *History of Christianity in Xinjiang China* (Boston: Chinese Christian Theological Association, 2009). He has a MAR from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and a STM from Boston University, School of Theology.

42 Irene Eber, *The Jewish Bishop & the Chinese Bible*, S.I.J. Schereschewsky (1831-1906) (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 1999), 207.

43 Ibid., 231.

44 Chinese Union Version Bible, *New Testament*.

45 Wang, *Pluralistic China*, 146.

Preparing Urban Scholar Practitioners

THEO WILLIAMS

Theo Williams grew up playing basketball, dreaming he'd play professionally someday. But as Theo entered college, God used a series of injuries to change his priorities. He began to coach, using basketball to reach inner city youth for Jesus Christ.

Theo enrolled in the Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME), the Boston campus of Gordon-Conwell. While at CUME, Theo co-founded and served as president of Antioch, Inc., a nonprofit committed to reconciliation, assisted in the planting of a church and honed his poetry skills. Upon graduating in 2004 with a Master of Arts in Urban Ministry, Theo and his wife Nicole spent a year in Jamaica mentoring youth through sports and music.

Theo currently works at Bethel College in Mishawaka, Indiana, as Associate Professor of Communication, as well as the Faculty Coordinator for the Center for Intercultural Development.

Whether teaching speech, conducting multicultural youth ministry, recording a spoken-word album, or starting a new church, Theo is integrating what he learned in the classroom and through his experiences at CUME.



"I began to see how basketball could be a part of lifelong ministry, and I realized I needed further preparation to give me a theological foundation as well as a hands-on training. Above all, I wanted a seminary committed to inner-city ministry."

—Theo Williams

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

CENTER FOR URBAN MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

The Boston Campus of
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
90 Warren Street, Boston, MA 02119

www.gordonconwell.edu/boston
phone: 617-427-7293

Master of Arts in Urban Ministry • Master of Arts in Youth Ministry • Master of Arts in Educational Ministry • Master of Arts in Counseling • Master of Divinity • Master of Theology (Th.M.)

Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary



SOUTH HAMILTON CHARLOTTE | BOSTON | JACKSONVILLE

THINK Theologically | **ENGAGE** Globally | **LIVE** Biblically

No Other Name: No Other Needed Identity¹

Woodrow E. Walton

On the scriptural basis of Matthew 12:46-50, Mark 3:31-36, and 9:38-40, there is strong warrant for Christian believers not having any identity other than that of belonging to Christ Jesus. As there is no other name than that of Jesus by whom we are saved, there is no other needed identity for those who worship him and affirm Him as Lord and Savior. The larger society identifies Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Eastern Orthodox as “Christians,” even as it questions the appropriateness of the name. The outward behaviors of “Church people” toward one another and the larger culture do not always reflect a “Christian” identity. One branch of the Christian family refer to the others as their “separated brethren,” another declare themselves the older branch “prior to Rome,” and many Protestants wonder about Roman Catholics and know even less, if anything, of the Eastern Orthodox and Asian Churches, besides bickering among themselves on matters other than their avowed common belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

It is the purpose of this article to address five issues affecting the matter of identity. The first arises out of Christian dogma. The second issue is that of the Christian ethic and moral theology. The third revolves around the relationship between evangelism and seeking justice. The fourth issue has to do with faith and order, particularly with regard to liturgy and church polity. The fifth is related to ethnicity and race. Fundamentally, these are not problems as much as areas of Christian faith and practice out of which problems emerge and evoke argument.

Dogma is not negated but affirmed. Crucial Christian character is also affirmed without reducing everything down to a code of ethics. Outreach in all aspects of Christian mission from social service to social justice and humanitarian aid is an absolute requirement as Mark 9:38-40 indicates, while recognizing that Christian life is more than philanthropy. Faith and order are highly necessary but rigidity in polity and liturgy is questioned. Lastly, Christians recognize a common humanity both in regard to their fallen humanity and God seeing them as his eschatological “kingdom without borders,” as Miriam Adeney describes the common calling in Christ.²

Tony Evans, in his *Oneness Embraced*, identifies Christians’ lack of common identity and preoccupation with church matters as rendering the common Christian witness impotent in the face of the challenges and problems that plague the world.³ He looks at the divides as relating to race and ethnicity, while Miriam Adeney considers the impact on the global mission around the world.

“One God has called one people to be one body. It is we who have divided the body,” wrote Cornelius Platinga, Jr., in 2002, in his *Beyond Doubt: Faith-Building Devotions on Questions Christians Ask*.⁴ Plantinga’s answer was that it begins with “Could we, perhaps, begin by trying to keep the unity of the Spirit in the local church to which we now belong?”⁵ He recognized that God had a hand in the variety of Christian expressions. He referred to the “colorful spectrum of music, clothing, language, gesture and other cultural adaptations of the gospel,” but that it was not God who “splintered the church into pieces.”⁶

1 This article was presented at the Nov. 17, 2011 “Other Voices in Interpretation” Study Group of the Evangelical Theological Society in San Francisco, CA.

2 Miriam Denney, *Kingdom without Borders: The Untold Story of Global Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

3 Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced through the Eyes of Tony Evans* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2011).

4 Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Beyond Doubt: Faith-Building Devotions on Questions Christians Ask* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 264.

5 Plantinga, 265.

6 Ibid, 264.

It is this author's contention that there is another contributing factor involved that is not often expressed and that is our personality factor. Each of us appropriates God's grace according to the impact Christ Jesus has had upon us. In turn, our interpretation and confession is affected. We may define that impact as "reconciliation," "justification," "expiation," "born-again," or "regeneration." Dogma is not affected. The "confession," "affirmation," or "doctrine," on the other hand, just might be affected (as well as the "faith and order"). What results are different wordings describing the same action of God in Christ among confessional bodies of Christians as well as among theologians.

In finding a center for dogma and confession, this writer has leaned heavily upon the late Jaroslav Pelikan's *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*.⁷ This writer has also relied upon Donald Bloesch's distinction between dogma and doctrine.⁸

In defining the moral center of the Christian life that bonds all Christian bodies together in agreement, no one has done a better job than Richard B. Hayes, the present Dean of the Duke Divinity School, in his *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*: the "three images of community, cross, and new creation bring the moral vision of the New Testament canon into focus and provide a matrix about which we can speak meaningfully about the unity of New Testament ethics."⁹

In his chapter on "The Rule of Prayer and the Rule of Faith," Pelikan makes the observation that "prayer has to be ranked above creed. . ."¹⁰ He mentions the prominence of the Lord's Prayer among Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox. It is the leveler for all Christian groups irrespective of their interpretive and confessional stances. All affirm Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is in this regard that it can be maintained there need be no other identity than that which comes from Christ Jesus. "Therefore," writes Pelikan, "not the confession of the faith but prayer is to be the continuous activity of Christian believers."¹¹

Since prayer is central in worship and the Christian liturgy, it is interesting to note that Stanley Hauerwas comes close to Pelikan's understanding of the Christian walk. "Because the Christian story is an enacted story, liturgy is probably a much more important resource than are doctrines or creeds for helping us hear, tell, and live the story of God," writes Hauerwas in his *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*.¹² This may be questionable but the place of prayer as encounter with the living God in worship is not. No matter how simple, liturgical, or ornate the worship, from Pentecostal to Melkite Catholic to Russian Orthodox, prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ and, especially, the Our Father, whether addressed as *Pater Noster*, *Padre Nosotros*, or *Unser Vater*, levels everyone at the foot of the cross. In an interview with *Christianity Today's* editor David Neff, Bishop Kallistos Ware replied to a question regarding the starting point for Orthodoxy by saying: "We start from prayer, not from an absolute ideology, not from moral rules, but from a living link with Christ expressed through prayer."¹³

Since there is no other name by which men and women may be saved, there is, therefore, no other needed identity among Christians but Christ Jesus Himself. Confessions and doctrines vary, but Christ Jesus is the one who is confessed and whose way is taught.

7 Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

8 Donald G. Bloesch, *Christian Foundations: A Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 119-123.

9 Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 204.

10 Pelikan, 158.

11 Pelikan, 159.

12 Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 26.

13 Kallistos (Timothy) Ware in the CT Interview with David Neff, "The Fullness and the Center," *Christianity Today* (July 2011): 40.

There is no simple answer leading to the resolution of differences among Christians and their various affiliations, but it is not the avowed purpose of this article to resolve those differences, but to place those differences where they belong in subservience to the allegiance due to Jesus who is declared to be the anointed one (Messiah) of God, the Son of God, Savior. To this allegiance, all other affirmations, confessions, doctrines, and differences are submissive.

From Roman Catholic to Orthodox and from Orthodox to Protestant of any stripe, Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, and Amish, “The Lord Jesus Christ” is critical as the point of faith. From Roman Catholic to Orthodox and from Orthodox to Protestant of any stripe, the Cross, the Resurrection, and the teachings of Christ Jesus, along with the wisdom of the communion of saints (community), and the power of the Holy Spirit determine the Christian ethic. It may not always follow Thomas a’Kempis’s pattern set forth in his *Imitation of Christ*. The Christian ethic may instead follow the path of Orthodoxy’s *kenosis* theology or Sheldon’s “What would Jesus do?” The ethic begins with following Jesus and doing as He does. The example of Christ Jesus’ life is very much present in historic Catholic, Protestant, and Kenotic Orthodox theology. The Cross is critical – “even to death on a Cross” (Phil 2:8), whether preached in a Baptist Church, professed in Orthodox Christianity, or expressed in the Roman Catholic Liturgy. There is also no essential difference as to the importance of the fellowship of believers whether described as “sobornost,” “communion of saints,” “*Gemeinschaft*,” or “*koinonia*.” No Christian is an island. The Resurrection describes the new life, raised from death to new life, victory in Christ, which is celebrated in baptism.

The essential unity is there; it is the disagreements among believers that obscure it and the “outer dress” which disguises and covers it. The unity that is there rests upon the admission that Christ is Lord. There is also the supportive Nicaean Creed undergirding the entire Christian edifice in which the Amish *Gemeinschaft*, the Catholic Communion of Saints, the Evangelical voluntary associations, and the Orthodox *sobornosts* have inclusion.

There is also an on-looking society which settles for the superficial and which asks questions and makes statements like “I can be good” outside of church, “it is all about loving your neighbor,” “Christians are hypocrites. They can’t even get along with each other.” “I can worship God out in nature,” “Creeds aren’t that all important” is another inane remark. What one believes does matter.

It is important to face such societal impressions and reactions. It is also critical to deal with the impressions we have of each other. It is essential that we, as Christians, get past arguing with each other and concentrate on presenting the gospel and on the spiritual formation which turns believers into Christ-bearers.

This is easier said than done because each preacher and each Christian believer has his or her own “take” on the gospel message; however, there is a way if he or she considers the content of all worship and all preaching is that of “telling and celebrating the biblical story of God creating and redeeming this world” through Jesus.¹⁴ At its most basic, worship is a celebration and a retelling of the story of God being in Christ redeeming fallen humanity regardless of the degree of formality or informality of liturgical style. By the same principle of *lex orandi lex credende*, so also *lex orandi lex victum*, as one prays, one lives.

The dogma of the Church is the revelation of God in Christ. It is succinctly proclaimed by Paul in Second Corinthians 5:19: “that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation” (TNIV). On this and on Philippians 2:1-11 are all doctrine and morality legitimately based. The basic spelled-out testimony is found in First Corinthians 15:3-8. How it is expressed is variable as the individual gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John clearly demonstrate yet all work from the same

14 Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken, *Renovation of the Church: What Happens When a Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 249, 253.

beginning point: “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). All else is interpretation and commentary. All good and legitimate theology begins at this point regardless of whether we end up as Wesleyan, Reformed, Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Anabaptist, or Pentecostal believers. At the Cross and the Empty Tomb, we need not only no other identification, but also no other moral or ethical center than Christ Himself.

A person can be moral and not be Christian. Paul points out in Romans 3:10 that “There is no one righteous, not even one,” explaining there are dimensions in life which go beyond the pale of moral behavior, courtesy, and right behavior. Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935), wrote a poem about such a person whom he named Richard Cory:

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

The poem ended on a sad note when it reveals that “Richard Cory one calm summer night went home and put a bullet through his head.” Therefore, the gospel of Jesus Christ goes beyond morality and simply being good and addresses the heart, mind, and spirit of people. Since behavior can be programmed, what counts more than behaviors that we consider admirable to the point of imitation is what goes on within the hearts and mental states of people. The gospel makes new creations which work not from the outside in as most behavioral counselors do, but from the inside out. It is not so much “What would Jesus do,” as first popularized by Charles Sheldon in his book *In His Steps* published in 1897 and then revitalized by the “What Would Jesus Do” wrist-bands in the 1990s. Clark Carlton, an Orthodox writer, described it best when he wrote: “A Saint, therefore, is not simply a good person. A Saint is one whose life has been so transformed by the grace of God that he or she radiates that grace to those around.”¹⁵ It is conformity to Christ’s life that transforms. The fundamental moral failure of humanity is not simply behavioral, but begins in the predisposition of pride which afflicts both the moral person and the immoral one.

Moral and ethical issues can often be resolved more easily within the Christian community. Within the Christian community is a Holiness tradition stemming from the Methodist General Conferences of 1824 and 1832 which made urgent calls for greater stress upon personal holiness. During the 1840s, Phoebe Palmer and her husband, Dr. Walter Palmer, held Tuesday night meetings which placed great stress upon personal holiness. In 1839, a periodical appeared entitled *The Guide to Christian Perfection*. Established in Boston by Timothy Merritt, by 1865 *The Guide* . . . was purchased by the Palmers and renamed *The Guide to Holiness*. The concern for personal holiness and the sanctified life also affected the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists at Oberlin College. Charles Finney, William Boardman, and Baptist evangelist A.B. Earle were early proponents of holiness. These individuals attacked the institution of slavery, alcoholism, and singled out other social problems. The Wesleyan Methodist Church, The Salvation Army, the Church of the Nazarene, and other churches within the Holiness Movement were in the forefront. Samuel Logan Brengel, an early Salvation Army Leader, identified holiness as conformity to the nature of God in a manner that was very close to Eastern Orthodoxy thought.

When Wesley wrote his “Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” which covered his preaching and teaching from 1725 to 1775, he referred specifically to “simplicity of intention, and purity of affection,” being “all devoted” and “having ‘the mind which was in Christ.’”¹⁶ He wrote that “by perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God, and our neighbor, ruling our tempers,

¹⁵ Clark Carleton, *The Faith: Understanding Orthodox Christianity* (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 1997), 33.

¹⁶ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, third edition, Vols. 11 and 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996). Reprint from the 1872 edition issued by Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, London, Vol. 11, 367.

words, and actions.”¹⁷ The way the concept played out within the Holiness-Pentecostal movement, however, was in the creation of newer denominations which appeared, even if not intentionally, to foster a legalism and separateness which strained relationships with those Christian affiliations regarded as “lax” in the eyes of the Holiness congregations. There was one exception, and that was The Salvation Army, whose holiness standard propelled Booth, Bengal, and others into social welfare and outreach.

It was difficult to bridge, much less narrow, the gap between the Holiness churches and the more “socially liberal” churches though they shared the same fundamental faith in Christ Jesus the Lord. Over time, however, some churches, as the Wesleyan and the Church of the Nazarene, built bridges which spanned those differences, particularly with the formation of the National Evangelical Association, in whose inception the Pentecostal-Holiness had a part.

More than any other event to overcome the separateness of the churches were the big urban crusades, initiated primarily by D.L. Moody and carried to their greatest extent by Billy Graham’s worldwide evangelistic efforts. The formation of the Evangelical Theological Society in 1948 was another milestone in overcoming the “identity problem.” Its membership ranged from Anglicans to Mennonites to Pentecostals and included schools as diverse as Marquette University, and St. Michael’s College to Tabor College and Oral Roberts University.

For a long time, the issue of evangelism and social justice created an “identity crisis” not so much along denominational lines as it was a matter of priorities. Some Christians were classed as “social gossellers,” and others as more true to the Great Commission of preaching the gospel. That is no longer a viable issue. Both sides now recognize the danger of the over-stressing of one over the other. There is no longer an issue of what comes first. What has taken its place is an ongoing argument over the way or the how of working for social justice. There are divisions within on burning issues as abortion and GLBT¹⁸ rights. These are bitter, and divisions occur, but they are more intra-denominational than one denomination against another.

As for faith and order issues, polity matters are probably the easier to clarify. Some denominational identities come from their polity rather than from their doctrinal stress or their founders. In many situations, they are “hidden” identity differences. Nazarenes, Pentecostal Holiness, Methodists, Episcopal/ Anglican, are episcopal in polity. Reformed churches are, by and large, presbyterial, as are the various Presbyterians bodies, the Assemblies of God, and German and Dutch Reformed affiliations. The congregational polity is prominent among the Baptists, the Congregationals, and the Church of Christ. For the most part polity causes an “identity” problem for Southern Baptists who practice closed communion as do the Anglicans and the Roman Catholics, but from different perspectives on the nature of the church.¹⁹ This desperately needs to be overcome. The Anabaptist concept of the church as a gathered body is carried over into the Southern and Landmark Baptist (American Baptist Conference) which affects the observation of the Lord’s Supper. The issue of Holy Communion has also troubled Lutheran-Reformed-Anabaptist relationships but from a more theological understanding of the Lord’s Supper. Even with the difference, the Marburg Articles of 1529 acknowledged a consensus that “we all believe and hold concerning the supper of our dear Lord Jesus Christ . . . that the sacrament of the altar is a sacrament of the true body and blood of our dear Lord Jesus Christ.”²⁰ It has been said that the Lord’s Supper has been the most divisive when it should be the most uniting.

¹⁷ Ibid, 446.

¹⁸ Gay, Lesbians, Bisexuals, and Transgender.

¹⁹ The Southern Baptists, without being Anabaptist in origin, adhere to the concept of the gathered local fellowship. Anglicans and Roman Catholics adhere to the doctrine that the Eucharist is to be celebrated by those who are “duly ordained” in direct “apostolic succession” from the early apostles.

²⁰ Marburg Articles, Article 15.

Finally, there is the ethnicity and racial issue, and it is not just one of racial prejudice, but also one of homogeneity and heterogeneity in church make-up. I question the wisdom of strictly African-American, Asian-American, and Hispanic-American congregations and also Native-American ones. There is certain wisdom in it but it is a “questionable wisdom.” It is not a simple matter of segregation. It is a question of legitimacy in light of the biblical vision of all peoples, tongues, and nations together in Christ. Even though like may gravitate toward like in evangelism, it need not stay that way to create permanent homogeneous congregations of Spanish, Koreans, Italians, Brazilians, Africans, Native Americans, and white Europeans. It has been said that 11:00 A.M., Sundays, is the most segregated hour of the week. Yet, it is not solely a matter of prejudice, though sadly that surely exists. Congregations of Christ followers need to be heterogeneous to reflect all nations, races, and tongues, together affirming Jesus as Lord.

There are nonetheless hopes for the end of the identity problem. Many local churches have downplayed denominational distinctives for their neighborhood situations. This does not mean dropping their unique affiliations, but it does broaden their evangelistic vision and ministry opportunities. There is a place for affiliation particularly for pastors. This writer is a strong believer in an accountability structure beyond the local congregation for pastors.

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, the retired general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, recently broached the subject of “identity”: “We have a chance of bringing in more around the table the way God really intends. The missional church needs the unity of the church. How else do we think we can do useful things for the world if we’re divided among ourselves?”²¹ Granberg-Michaelson was reared in an evangelical Dutch Reformed household where being “born again” was a critical matter.

Granberg-Michaelson had a background similar to the present writer’s. Both of us have had early relationships with Catholics and with various ethnic and racial churches. Ethnic diversity is vital to the body of Christ, Granberg-Michaelson maintained in both his memoir *Unexpected Diversity: An Evangelical Pilgrimage to World Christianity* and the article on him in the *Christian Century*.²² He was also critical of both the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, which both exclude “huge parts of the Christian family.” He had in mind the Pentecostals and Roman Catholics. I would add the Anabaptist bodies as the Hutterian Brethren (also referred to as Hutterites) and the Amish, though they would probably elect not to be in association even while being part of the Christian family. They are, nonetheless, part of the family and need to be so regarded, since both Jakob Hutter and Jacob Amman were products of the 16th century Christian reform movements and share with Protestantism, Catholicism, and Orthodoxy, the declaration that Jesus is Lord as well as the confessions of the ecumenical councils from Nicaea in A.D. 325 to Chalcedon in A.D. 451.

There appears to be no other way out of the problem of each one wanting to preserve some vestige of identity as “I am of Apollos,” “I am of Peter,” “I am of Paul,” “I am of Christ,” “. . . of Wesley,” “of Calvin,” “of Luther,” “Arminius,” “Full Gospel,” and on down the line, except to acknowledge that if there is no other name under heaven by which men and women may be saved than that of Christ Jesus, the Son of God, our Lord. There is no other needed identity. Rather than majoring on our differences, we need to move toward stressing what we share together and what we have to give each other for the sake of Jesus’ way in the world and for the extension of his love in this sin-sick world. Of the many difficulties to overcome, the greatest is that of the stronghold of individualism which strangles to death any sense of the church as community. In America,

21 Quoted by *Christian Century*, August 9, 2011, in the article “Ecumenical Veteran Sees a ‘New Frontier’,” reported by Paul R. Kopenkoskey, RNS: 18.

22 Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *Unexpected Destinations: An Evangelical Pilgrimage to World Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 288. “Ecumenical Veteran Sees a ‘New Frontier’,” Paul Kopenkoskey, RNS, *Christian Century*, August 9, 2011:18.

especially, we tend toward aggregations of individuals thrown together without any sense of life together, whether on the local level or any other level. That is something that the Mennonites, Amish, and the Hutterite Brethren can teach the rest of us who are hung up on being unique rather than being sharers together of the grace given us through Christ Jesus Our Lord. To the Amish and the Dunkards, the rest of us may be the “English,” but it is worthy of note that they put a premium on community. It was one of the latter, William D. Benedict, an Old Order German Baptist (Dunkard) who accepted the invitation by Billy Graham to be the publisher of *Christianity Today* in its early years. This was a real clasping of hands “across the aisles” of a common faith.

Woodrow E. Walton, D.Min. (Oral Roberts University Graduate School of Theology); B.A. (Texas Christian University); B.D. [M.Div] (Duke Divinity School), M.A. (University of Oklahoma), is a retired Seminary Dean and Professor of biblical, practical theology, and historical studies. An ordained Assemblies of God minister, he and his wife live in Shattuck, OK. He retains membership with the Evangelical Theological Society, American Association of Christian Counselors, American Society of Church History, and the International Society of Frontier Missiology. He maintains a life of writing and speaking engagements as well as “farm life.”

FORGIVENESS IS GOOD MEDICINE

After extensive research at Cancer Treatment Centers of America, author and pastor Michael Barry made a startling discovery: the immune system and forgiveness are very much connected.

Read the inspiring stories of five patients who experienced dramatic recovery after they learned to forgive and discover proven strategies that you can implement to find peace with your past, relief from hatefulness, and hope for healing.

THE FORGIVENESS PROJECT

+

The Startling Discovery of How to Overcome Cancer, Find Health, and Achieve Peace

MICHAEL S. BARRY

The Forgiveness Project
The Startling Discovery of How to Overcome
Cancer, Find Health, and Achieve Peace
By Michael S. Barry
978-0-8254-2656-8 • \$14.99 paper

+

Michael Barry, D.Min. is Director of Pastoral Care at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America, Philadelphia, specializing in the connection between spirituality and health. He has a Doctor of Ministry degree from Fuller Theological Seminary and a Master of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary. He is the author of three books on spirituality, cancer, and healing: *A Reason for Hope*, *A Season for Hope*, and *The Art of Caregiving*.

+

 **Kregel**
Publications

A Divisive Great Commission? “Growth” versus “Discipleship” in the Role of the Church¹

Jim Hartman

What Is the Role of the Church in Making “Disciples of All Nations”?

Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...” (Matt 28:19).² Many pastors measure their impact for Christ via quantity: attendance, resources, programs, and other venues for participation.³ Others focus more on discipleship: orthopraxy, “fruit of the Spirit” or “spiritual maturity” and other measures of individual sanctification.⁴ Each approach demonstrates what seems to be historically strong results,⁵ but neither is without detractors. On one hand, the “consumer focus” of prominent church growth methodologies is a target of many disenfranchised Christians, for whom a focus on numbers leaves behind individuals who do not “assimilate.”⁶ On the other hand, some discipleship methodologies leave structurally averse believers potentially devoid of an important aspect of Christian community.⁷ Should the Church’s focus be numeric/geographic growth or discipleship? Caustic rhetoric at the poles of this discussion⁸ is unifying and demands a sound, unifying answer, which this essay attempts to approach.

Church Growth: The Numbers Cannot Lie

In *The Purpose-Driven Church*, author and pastor Rick Warren indicates that his goal is health: “The issue is church health, not church growth... If your church is healthy, growth will occur naturally.”⁹ Making the natural assumption that growth indicates health, Warren asserts in other writing that individual churches can remain vibrant, no matter how large, provided an appropriate small group structure within the church addresses discipleship and counseling needs.¹⁰ He further

1 This essay was first written for Dr. William David Spencer for Systematic Theology 3 (Jan. 3, 2012).

2 All biblical quotations are taken from the *English Standard Version*, 2011.

3 As evidence of the importance of church growth among pastors and people in general, a Google search for “church growth books” yielded as its first result an Amazon.com search results page listing 20,616 results, www.amazon.com/s/?ie=UTF8&keywords=church+growth+books&tag=googhydr-20&index=stripbooks&hvadid=4474358619&ref=pd_sl_8fxfaf245_e, accessed December 27, 2011.

4 www.ccci.org/training-and-growth/classics/the-spirit-filled-life/index.htm, accessed December 27, 2011, on the Campus Crusade for Christ International website *Training* section entitled “Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?”

5 While it is easy to find information about languages into which both growth and discipleship ministry works have been translated, to see or extrapolate revenue streams around the work and materials of church growth and discipleship organizations, or to count the number of ministry groups which have multiplied internationally, it is quite difficult to find quantification of conversions to Christianity.

6 This sentiment is felt keenly enough throughout the Church to have prompted responses from Christians, pastors, and theologians for years, one of the most interesting of which, if only for its title (and its anti-consumerism slant) is the book: *Left Behind in a Mega-Church World: How God Works through Ordinary Churches* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006) by Ruth A. Tucker, Associate Professor of Missiology at Calvin Theological Seminary.

7 Some even question whether the structured, organizational approach of discipleship organizations amounts to cultism: www.culthelp.info/index.php?option=content&task=view&itemid=743, accessed December 27, 2011.

8 Against church growth: “This church growth movement is rooted in an unholy alliance of ‘Christians’ and atheists.” www.crossroad.to/News/Church/Klenck1.html, accessed December 19, 2011, written by Dr. Robert M. Klenck. Against discipleship: “They have all the issues buttoned down and have cast-iron opinions about all of them. These people only know black and white. There are no gray areas to them. They insist you live your Christian life according to their rules and their opinions. If you insist on being free to live as God wants you to live, they will try to intimidate you and manipulate you one way or another. Their primary weapons are guilt trips, rejection, or gossip...” from *The Reformed Traveler*, <http://thereformedtraveler.wordpress.com/2011/09/25/controllers-no-incidental-matter>, accessed December 27, 2011.

9 Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), Kindle edition, location 7.

10 Rick Warren, “Small Groups Give Every Member Personal Care and Attention.” *Christian News, The Christian*

asserts that evangelization, like growth, is a natural result of a healthy church.¹¹ In pursuit of evangelistic gains, programs and marketing which do not produce growth are eliminated.¹² Doesn't good biblical stewardship aim to achieve maximum benefit for God from resources on-hand?

Growth in a church indicates a willing agreement with the philosophies and programs in which individuals are participating, at least at some level. In our consumer-driven United States culture, *numbers make sense*: aggregation and historical comparison (performance trending) serve as measurements of success. A growing church displays encouraging momentum to both leaders and church members.

Christ himself used growth/health analogies in describing both the kingdom of heaven and the process of bearing fruit during the Christian journey. He described the mustard seed's transformative growth as one example (Matt 13:32). The sower's seed parable demonstrates a performance evaluation, comparing those that did not flourish with others who "produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty" (Matt 13:8). Poor performance can also be interpreted as having clear consequences with Christ. "Jesus reserved his severest judgment for the unfruitful tree."¹³ When the growth of the fig tree was not up to his standard, providing him no fruit to eat, Christ cursed the tree and it withered (Matt 21:19-20). Branches which do not produce fruit are pruned (John 15:2). Luke describes the success of the Pentecost in terms of numbers (Acts 2:41). Performance appears to be biblically relevant at many levels. When appropriate, numbers can best convey changes in value: trends. Metrics provide context for understanding a ministry's practical viability from a "macro" perspective, interpreting the tangible presence of willing participants and their offered resources as evidence of progress in *making disciples of all the nations*.

Discipleship: Following Christ's Example

If church growth can be viewed as a "macro" approach, then it might be accurate to view discipleship as a "micro" or "nano" approach. Discipleship (*akolouthēin*) indicates "walking behind" or "following" Christ.¹⁴ The Navigators, a prominent discipleship focused ministry,¹⁵ maintains the slogan: "To Know Christ and Make Him Known" and describes discipleship as a process of "life-on-life mentoring."¹⁶ Discipleship-as-focus aims to concentrate on the individual, face to face, as Christ did with his disciples.

The most crucial components of discipleship and discipling can be seen in how Christ interacted with and led his disciples. He chose them, placing a call on their lives (Matt 4:19, 21). He allowed them to self-select their level of involvement (John 6:60-66). He lived with them—intimately, transparently, and authentically (Matt 4:18-28:20). He worked through spiritual concerns with them and provided explanation of difficult spiritual teachings (Matt 13:10-23). He led by example (Matt 14:25). He provided them with vision (Matt 28:18-20) and encouragement (Matt 14:27).

Proponents of discipleship-as-focus achieve *making disciples of all the nations* through the

Post. <http://global.christianpost.com/news/small-groups-give-every-member-personal-care-and-attention-6412/> (accessed November 15, 2011).

11 Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 51-53.

12 Ibid, 90. Warren has become both famous and notorious by embracing business principles of Peter Ferdinand Drucker, one of which is the idea of "planned abandonment" or the idea that anything which is not producing the expected results, even if it has succeeded in the past, is released, without emotion (Peter F. Drucker, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*, 1974. Reprint (New York: HarperBusiness, 1993).

13 Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 62.

14 *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), volume II, 207: "*akolouthēin* 'to walk behind, to follow' (frequently used in the NT as a specialized term for following Jesus)... characterizes the central quality of existence as a disciple."

15 www.navigators.org/us/aboutus/what-we-do, accessed December 27, 2011.

16 Ibid.

nature of discipleship itself: following and imitating Christ: 1) knowing what Christ did and said within the entire context of the Bible, and 2) following the example of Christ in living, which includes teaching others to be Christ-like through deep, life-together relationships, with the intent that those others repeat the process, teaching others themselves.¹⁷ Seekers of godly discipleship attempt to avoid areas where church growth has come under attack—falling under the influence of slick marketing/manipulation as a tool, popularity/market profits as a reward, and aggregate numeric goal achievement as a sure sign of God’s favor—by keeping things one-on-one.¹⁸

Growth and Discipleship Are the Solutions

The “church growth movement” and the discipleship work of many discipleship organizations appears to have been instrumental in glorifying God and working towards the full achievement of the “Great Commission,” if judged by the testimonials of their ministers and converts alone.¹⁹ When motivated by godly intent, organizations that produce praiseworthy results are justly (and literally) worthy of praise precisely for those results. The truth of our God-given abilities to adapt creatively to meet the spiritual and also felt needs of people who want to attend a church that feels “just right” to them, or the truth of each believer’s God-given, empowered equipping to disciple *someone* compassionately right at this moment would be difficult to argue against. The caustic rhetoric that exists around the church-growth versus discipleship discussion is often unedifying and inappropriate. However, that is not to say the rhetoric is baseless. Where there is cause for appropriate, edifying correction, it should be made.

The church-growth movement began as part of “a series of underlying commitments”:

...to Christian renewal through renewal of the church, as opposed to politics or the culture; to the renewal of the church through the renewal of the local church, as opposed to the denomination or the parachurch ministry; to the renewal of the local church through the renewal of mission, as opposed to other priorities; and, most importantly, to the renewal of mission along one of two avenues—through charismatic renewal or through the employment of the behavioral sciences’ insights and tools to aid effective evangelism. In this final area... proponents use tools from the fields of management, marketing, psychology, and communications as they seek to “grow churches.” Viewed in this broader way, the church-growth movement is a “back to basics” movement with a modern twist.²⁰

The beginning intent of the church-growth movement—to reach the un-churched for Christ—was above reproach. Much of what is *intended* within the church-growth movement remains above reproach, but the fallen nature of individuals causes reason for division between those most vehemently for and against church growth. A cycle of the Holy Spirit’s intervening in humanity’s fallen nature provides a framework for every Church division and failing.

The fallen nature of humanity can, even within the church, bend and supplant the motivations of individuals who began with noble intent—or in the case of individuals within the Church, godly intent: crying out to God and clearly seeking his truth to discern a response to some circumstance or issue. Over time, people seem to move from pure godly intent towards fallenness: from proclaiming truth, to orthodoxy, to doctrinal interpretation, to structures created to support

17 Nicole Cottrell, “What is Discipleship?” <http://modernreject.com/2011/04/what-is-discipleship/> (accessed June 20, 2012); & Greg Laurie, “What Is Discipleship? : How to Know God : Harvest Ministries.” <http://www.harvest.org/knowgod/new-believer/foundations-for-living/what-is-discipleship.html> (accessed June 20, 2012).

18 Michael S. Horton, “What is Discipleship Anyway?” www.modernreformation.org/default.php?page=articledisplay&var1=ArtRead&var2=1082&var3=main (accessed June 20, 2012).

19 See navigators.org, ccci.org, or willowcreek.com for numerous testimonials.

20 Os Guinness, *Dining with the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 13.

doctrine, to polarization around power positions and self-preservation, to oppression or abuse by power, to a response of outrage, and finally back to crying out to God and seeing truth.²¹

Those who attack the church growth movement fall into the “response of outrage” category, addressing the “offenses” of growth-as-priority. The categorization of offensive principles seems to follow this trajectory: the assumption that growth is always good; therefore, growth must be ongoing; therefore, growth must be the primary focus—to the exclusion of those who do not keep pace. The rationale that growth indicates life and that life indicates health is often, but not always, correct. Cancer is known for its tremendous growth, but its growth, unmitigated, always leads to death.²² The idea that a church must keep growing to be healthy, must, at some point become absurd. Nothing grows continuously, especially humans: one’s physical growth rate changes throughout childhood and up to maturity.²³

Likewise, churches can grow effectively only to the point beyond which they exceed the scope and capacity of their pastor: transparency is proportionally inverse to delegation. As layers of delegation increase, transparency—from any individual viewpoint—must decrease. It is impossible, as a leader, to know exactly what is happening throughout all layers of delegation. While we may claim discernment, we cannot claim omniscience. The bounds of effective growth for an individual church are not limitless, regardless of the effective multiplication of small groups. Cells divide as they grow. Children are born; they do not remain in the womb.

The notion of counting is also somewhat flawed. We cannot count *everything* about the counted. We can only count certain *aspects* of the counted: *member, regular attendee, food pantry volunteer* . . . While these are indicators of *something*, they do not represent full knowledge, potential, or value. If two people have poems—one has three, the other two—who has more? One has the 23rd Psalm, something by Jane Hirschfield, and something by her grandmother. The other has a copy of Hamlet and the first poem by his five year old son. These cannot be universally valued or quantified. Numbering and aggregation must relegate individuals or aspects of individuals to equal, countable values of one unit each, with two possible results: one or zero—have, or have not. Finally, purposeful urgency around continued growth requires personal goals to eventually take priority over Christ’s goals. If “a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet 3:8), it stands to reason that our human, fallen sense of urgency will eventually be in error. The role of the pastorate is to perceive at what point growth is not the priority and act accordingly.

For discipleship, the concerns are the same: when discipleship becomes more about process or maintaining the ideals, structure, or hierarchy of an organization than it is about Christ, the essence of Christ’s intent must begin to fade. There is a difference between displaying spiritual authority in a situation, such as Christ did when he healed the blind man (Matt 12:22), and *demanding the recognition of* “spiritual authority” over a situation (or people) because of one’s position. Christ never *forced* anyone to obey him. A shepherd urges with a rod and staff, giving direction towards safety, which is why the rod and staff are “comforting” (Ps 23:4). The rod and staff are not for subduing. Christ, cautioning against following misdirected/fallen teachers, said:

...My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one

21 Matthew Burt, lecture, CH502 Church History Since the Reformation, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Center for Urban Ministerial Education, Boston, March 19, 2011.

22 “Cancer grows out of normal cells in the body. Normal cells multiply when the body needs them, and die when the body doesn’t need them. Cancer appears to occur when the growth of cells in the body is out of control and cells divide too quickly. It can also occur when cells forget how to die.” www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0002267/ accessed December 27, 2011.

23 “If a person who was born 8 lbs. and 20 in. at birth continued growing at the same rate as he does the first year, by the time he reached 20, he’d be 25 ft. tall and weigh nearly 315 lbs.” www.facts.randomhistory.com/baby-facts.html, accessed December 27, 2011.

who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you seeking to kill me?” The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?” (John 7:16-21).

All fallen methods (teaching) seek to kill Christ. All should vigilantly follow God’s will, which is ultimately edifying, just, and loving. In our work of *going and making disciples of all the nations*, the concepts of helping others towards conversion and then spiritual maturity as followers of Christ have inappropriately collided as priorities in competition with organizational sustainability and the idea of progress itself. Our response should always be to correct, unify and love—simultaneously—even though the fallen nature of humanity will prevent the perfect achievement of this until Christ’s return. If the response to blessing is “We must be doing what God wants us to do!” instead of, “God has blessed us; what are we to do next?” then that path will create vulnerabilities, playing to a “prosperity gospel” mentality: that blessing always indicates blamelessness, and blamelessness always produces blessing. Neither is true.

Perhaps, instead of aiming for either growth or discipleship in achieving the “Great Commission,” we should be aiming instead to increase “spiritual maturity” for both individuals and organizations, moving through the process of sanctification towards the sorts of being and doing that allow anyone to “know that we are Christians by our love”—a love that honors and refers to the nature of God in its pursuit of blamelessness, its protection of the oppressed and poor, its call to holiness and worship of Christ, its recognition of the priesthood of all believers, its teachability, and its attempts to act in a manner that remains above reproach—so that people will “come” to be a part of it, “stay” as they are nurtured and become strong in their faith, and “go” as the Lord—not any human influence—leads them.

Born and raised in rural Pennsylvania, Jim Hartman enlisted in the Army at the age of 17 (as a trumpet player in the 19th Army Band) and later graduated from West Point to serve as an artillery officer. His corporate experience spans national operations, marketing, technology, and consulting work, primarily with the Fortune 500. Since moving to the nonprofit arena, he has consulted to and advised organizations nationwide in funding, program development, board development, branding, and overall strategy. He has lived and worked in Chicago, Atlanta, New York City, LA, and now Boston, where he resides with his wife and family. As a Master of Arts in Urban Ministry candidate for 2012 at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Jim has focused on developing a strong biblical framework to support the launch of a micro-business incubator aimed at poverty alleviation within a small focus area in Dorchester, a Boston neighborhood. He is the recipient of the 2012 Emmanuel Research Award, presented by the Emmanuel Gospel Center. Jim’s overall focus in ministry is the development of practical applications around the second half of Deut 15:11, “...therefore I command you, saying, you shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.”



Left to right: D.Min. students
Deanna Bridges and Rev. Laura Nelson

**“IT’S A HUGE HELP TO
SHARE LIKE JOURNEYS,
DIFFICULTIES, JOYS
AND STRUGGLES.”**



Right: Dr. David Currie
(Director of the
D.Min. Program) with
D.Min. student Tim
Philabaum



Laura Nelson and Deanna Bridges are two very different people discovering that learning together can be a great asset.

Both are pursuing a D.Min. in Pastoral Skills: Pastor as Preacher, Caregiver and Person. Deanna leads a ministry to Boston’s inner city teens. She needed deeper training and the credentials to work with local officials to secure services for the young people. “I have gained a wealth of knowledge just listening to fellow students talk about their trials and accomplishments,” she says. “Now I know what to watch out for, and what I want for my position as pastor to the youth.”

Laura, a senior pastor from British Columbia, wanted to improve her pastoral skills. She benefited immediately from the insights of classmates when a suicidal parishioner sought help. “Because we had talked about this as a class I knew some of the steps to take,” she observes. “...As pastors, we’re part of a unique world. It’s a huge help to share like journeys, difficulties, joys and struggles. Even if you’re from a different nationality, there’s a commonality.”

Call or email us at: 800.816.1837
dmininfo@gordonconwell.edu
www.gordonconwell.edu/dmin

**Gordon-Conwell
Theological Seminary**

SOUTH HAMILTON • CHARLOTTE • BOSTON • JACKSONVILLE

Preparing students to think theologically,
engage globally and live biblically.



Review of *Word Made Global: Stories of African Christianity in New York City* by Mark R. Gornik (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011)¹

Daewon Moon

Since the twentieth century, with the development of transportation and communication, globalization has had an enormous impact on the new shape of world Christianity. The influx of Christians immigrating into foreign countries during the last several decades, especially from the majority world to the West, has been more visible and effectual than in any other period of time. Though their reasons for emigrating differ, vast numbers of immigrants are bringing their own Christian traditions with them into other parts of the world. One of the most notable examples of this phenomenon is the “Embassy of God” Church in Kiev, Ukraine, arguably the largest church in Europe, which is led by a Nigerian immigrant pastor, Rev. Sunday Adelaja.² Despite some controversies over the practice and theology of the “Embassy of God” Church, one cannot ignore its extensive influence, not just in Ukraine, but also in other areas of Europe and Africa. Its great spiritual vitality stands as a symbolic landmark of global Christianity of the new era.

Mark Gornik’s in-depth research on African Christianity in New York City remarkably illustrates distinctive aspects of world Christianity of the twenty-first century as a transnational, cross-cultural, urban missionary movement. In New York City, a global hub of international business and commerce, the churches of African immigrants are growing phenomenally and expanding into other parts of the United States and Africa. These typically have a comprehensive and holistic view of salvation (with focus maintained on spiritual, physical, and material issues), and they also share a strong commitment to mission work, with a grand vision for the whole world. The particularly African approach to expanding world Christianity in the globalized urban context merits the special attention of mission scholars and practitioners. It is time to examine and evaluate African diaspora churches’ contribution to the formation of global Christianity in the United States in the twenty-first century. As the sociologist Stephen Warner rightly observed, “Immigration is creating not so much new diversity in American religion as new diversity within American Christianity.”³

After his extensive research and interview with African pastors and congregations in New York City for several years, Mark Gornik, Director of City Seminary of New York, observes that over the last few decades, African diaspora churches in New York City have helped new immigrants assimilate by providing social connections and practical benefits. During this period, one of the main reasons new immigrants have gone to church has been to receive practical assistance, such as how to find a house or a job. Another has been to meet emotional and spiritual needs through genuine community with others of their race and culture. Thus, Gornik contends that African pastors in many respects have performed “a role of cultural bridge building, a key activity that can enable their congregants to succeed in a new city” (82). Usually, their pastoral counsel has sought to help new immigrants to experience abundant life in Christ in their new environment. Gornik also notes that African immigrants view the church not as an escape or refuge, but as a central “place where life happens” (87). Through the refreshing experiences of worship and prayer in church, they are readied to face life’s challenges and take advantage of every opportunity in a global city.

1 This review was originally presented at Boston University School of Theology for Dr. Dana Robert on Oct. 20, 2011.

2 Dana L. Robert, *Joy to the World: Mission in the Age of Global Christianity* (New York: The United Methodist Church, 2010), 35. J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “African Initiated Christianity in Eastern Europe: Church of the ‘Embassy of God’ in Ukraine,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30 (2006): 73-75.

3 R. Stephen Warner, “Coming to America: Immigrants and the Faith They Bring,” *Christian Century*, 121, no. 3 (February 10, 2004): 20.

In the globalized world of the twenty-first century, however, this old assimilation model of incorporation through the immigrant church is declining. Thanks to the development of information technology, new immigrants can get information from other sources than the church. More importantly, the new generation of global migration today — including the second generation of immigrants — lives in more than one world. Those who were born in the United States or came to the U.S. at a very early age are technically and culturally Americans. At the same time, however, their appearance, family, culture, and tradition provide them an additional identity. So, assimilation into American culture and society is not the simple process that some assume it to be. This complexity calls for a more thoughtful response. One reason that African immigrant parents in the U.S. encourage their children to participate in African diaspora churches is that it helps them maintain a transnational identity — that is, their identity as Africans. It is important to note that the primary self-identity of African immigrants in the United States is “Christian” more than any other appellation (23).

The worship and liturgy of African diaspora churches in New York City are distinctive for their passionate singing and dancing, prayer for healing, and prophetic ministry. This reflects the Pentecostal movement of their home churches in Africa. The dynamic and remarkable work of the Holy Spirit in the present era is indeed “a primary gift of African Christianity to the West” (269). Gornik argues that the Pentecostal movement’s emphasis on the Holy Spirit gives it great flexibility and “an innate ability to make itself at home in almost any context” (32). In other words, no matter where it is located, the Pentecostal church is relatively open to the socio-cultural environment and able to adapt across cultures, with the unique freedom in the Holy Spirit. In particular, fervent prayer is very important to African Christians. African churches are widely referred to as praying communities. They pray without ceasing in the Spirit, sometimes with fasting. Prayer is a life-changing experience, because it “involves giving control of the individual and communal body to God” (144) through words, gestures, and fasting.

One of the most distinctive features of African Christianity in New York is its emphasis on the living God. This is clearly illustrated through the assertion of Mother Cooper of the Church of the Lord (Aladura): “If God is real, if God is living, if God is God, then God must still speak” (105). The theme verse of the Redeemed Christian Church of God International Chapel, Hebrews 13:8, also conveys the same conviction that “Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow” with a specific emphasis on “today” (116). African Christians find no dualism between the seen and the unseen, because they view God as very dynamic and responsive. Many stories and accounts in the Bible dramatically reveal that God is mighty and powerful to save his people in trouble. African Christians have a strong sense that this is still in effect “here and now.” The present power of God in healing, protection, blessing, and abundance lies at the heart of the pastoral ministry of African churches in New York. It reflects Africans’ holistic view of salvation, which transnational migration has not erased. It should be noted that their comprehensive understanding of salvation is not merely material, but also solidly biblical. For example, in the New Testament Jesus used the same Greek word (*sozo*) to communicate physical healing (Matt 9:22) and spiritual salvation (John 12:47).

African diaspora churches in the United States challenge American Christians to rethink the essence of pastoral ministry as well as the qualifications of a pastor. American pastors’ qualifications are formal theological education and professional experience, but the ministerial authority of African pastors is rooted in spiritual leadership and prophetic gifts. In addition to prayer for healing, the use of prophecy and dream in leading the church is particularly significant for African pastors. African Christians seek as their pastor a spiritual leader with a transformational relationship with God, not simply a Bible expositor or preacher. Another characteristic of African pastors is their focus on building what Gornik calls “communities of spiritual and social belonging where human flourishing can occur” (52). They do not strive to replicate the social networks of their home countries and cultures; rather, African pastors make every effort to build communities of faith across social, cultural, and generational borders. By doing so, they are, in fact, contributing to globalizing the gospel in their own place.

African immigrant Christians in New York also contribute several new concepts about missionary activity. The traditional understanding of mission involves crossing geographical and cultural boundaries

in order to present the message of the gospel. However, in New York City, immersed as it is in so many cultures, missionary work ought to be holistic and integrative, not narrowly defined in its approach. In this regard, the comprehensive understanding of salvation — including healing, wholeness, flourishing, and deliverance — among African Christians is indeed significant to promote mission as “a way of life” (206). The embodiment of the good news in ordinary daily lives proves to be the best means of mission. It is noteworthy that many African Christians in New York describe themselves as missionaries based on an understanding of mission, not as a specialized call, but as the task of every Christian. Furthermore, African churches do not have small visions; they have a global vision to reach the whole world for Christ. That explains why they strive to pray and work for the continuing flow of faith across borders. Just as they crossed a geographical border to come to the United States, they are willing to cross other socio-cultural borders to preach the gospel of Christ to as many people as possible.

Since the mid twentieth century, the acronym AIC has been used widely to refer to “African Initiative Churches” or “African Independent Churches” that emphasize the experience of the Holy Spirit and healing and reject Western modes of worship. In the context of rapid globalization and the huge migration of Africans during the last few decades, however, Gornik suggests that AIC could instead stand for “*African International Churches*” (23). Many AICs, whether in Africa or the United States, tend to be mission-minded with a strong conviction that God is calling Africans for mission work. Initially, their vision was to spawn pan-African mission movements, but today the orientation is more global. A growing emphasis on the international character of African churches, along with the emergence of the global Pentecostal movement, probably enables this significant advance in the AICs’ sense of purpose. There is no doubt that African diaspora churches flourishing in Western countries have significantly contributed to this change. All three African churches of New York City that Gornik discusses — the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, the Church of the Lord (Aladura), and the Redeemed Christian Church of God — began in Africa about a century ago, but now have a number of branches worldwide, outside of the African continent. The parish of African Christians is now the whole world.

Having worked at a Korean immigrant church in the Boston area for three years, I have no trouble identifying common interests in mission among immigrant Christians from different cultural backgrounds. Many who have lived outside of their own country for a long time consider themselves missionaries, commissioned by God with a certain purpose. They have a growing awareness of other non-Christian ethnic groups in their workplaces and schools, and they may intentionally initiate relationships for evangelism. Moreover, they are much more responsive to and supportive of career missionaries in other countries than in the past. Immigrant churches in the West have made unique contributions to missionary activities all over the world by providing fervent prayer, financial support, and cross-culturally prepared personnel.

One remaining task for immigrant churches in the United States for further development of world Christianity would be to build multiethnic congregations. None of the African churches that Gornik mentioned is multiethnic in a true sense; each church has a certain dominant ethnic group, either Ghanaians or Nigerians. They pattern most areas of their religious practice on the way they used to do things in Africa, with slight modifications for the American context. Many African diaspora churches want to be international in their theology and practice, but various issues — for instance, how to accommodate multiple languages or how to moderate different ministerial styles — have hindered their effort. The same would hold for other ethnic immigrant churches, whether Korean, Indian, Ethiopian, or Hispanic. It is never easy to find a multiethnic church in the United States with a healthy expression of a variety of cultures. Although it is extremely difficult to embrace a variety of cultures and languages in a single church, intentional effort to go beyond one’s own culture is absolutely necessary to build the multiethnic church. Since every culture reflects the unique beauty of God, Christian life in the multiethnic church will be far more abundant than

in any other churches. In addition, it will enable people to experience a foretaste of heaven, where every nation, tribe, people, and language will form one grand body of Christ (Rev. 7:4). The more we endeavor to be cross-cultural, the more we can clearly perceive that “culturally diverse forms of Christian faith are a gift to be celebrated, not a problem to be resolved” (268). After years of efforts, we will eventually see what it means to be the body of Christ: “global in scale, local in practice, and Catholic [that is, universal] in character” (278).

Daewon Moon is a Th.D. candidate in the joint missiology program between Boston University School of Theology and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He received his M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, MA. His academic interests include the missionary activities of non-Western Christians in recent decades and African Christianity in the global and urban context of the twenty-first century, with an emphasis on the AIC (African Initiated Church). Daewon and his wife, Jeong Hwa, have traveled extensively and been involved in various international mission ministries in Asia, Africa, and Europe with YWAM (Youth With A Mission) for the last decade. Daewon has been also involved in the Lausanne Movement since 2010.



A TRANSFORMING VISION
*Multicultural Fellowship
in college and in
the Church*
Edited by
Paul V. Sorrentino
Foreword by Chris Rine

“An extremely important book that moves racial reconciliation beyond a collegiate intellectual exercise.”
Stacy Riely Pardue,
Meredith College

“Rarely have I found a book to be simultaneously full of instruction, inspiration, encouragement and challenge.”
Mike Jordahl, The Navigators

available at
**amazon.com &
barnesandnoble.com**

also available by Doorlight Publishing *The Wormwood Archive & Jars of Clay*
doorlightpublish.com

Review of *Christianity and Chinese Culture* edited by Miikka Ruokanen and Paulors Huang (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010)

Mark Chuanhang Shan

On August 13, 2003, mainland Chinese and Western scholars and theologians gathered for a first-of-its-kind five-day theological conference, “Christianity and Chinese Culture: A Sino-Nordic Conference on Chinese Contextual Theology,” in Lapland, Finland. The nineteen papers that comprise this book were all presented at that conference. The book, which includes responses to the papers, is best suited for academics specializing in Christianity in China and theologians interested in church growth in China. Its thesis focuses on a question of both enculturation and contextualization: how is Protestant Christianity, which is experiencing phenomenal growth in China, both reacting to Christian teaching in the Chinese cultural and traditional context as well as adapting it to China’s modern social, political, and economic context?

A brief introduction to the background of churches and theologies in China is necessary to understand better the papers.

There are currently four theological approaches to interpreting the church in China today:

Academic “theology”—not a theology in the true sense of the word, this is a totally secular, social science approach employed by religious studies experts who want to build up and support Christianity both as a legitimate field of academic study and as a positive influence on Chinese society. This approach counters the communist demonization of Christianity in China. The prominent People’s University professor He Guanghu in Beijing and the American writer and scholar David Aikman are two of the best-known academic “theologians.” (Aikman’s groundbreaking book, *Jesus in Beijing*, released in 2003 just a few months after this conference, was the first to introduce to the Western world the phenomenal growth and great influence of “house churches” in China.)

Liberal Theology—espoused by the government’s Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), which oversees and controls Protestant Christianity in China, by non-Christian Chinese scholars of Christianity influenced by Western postmodernism, and by nationalistic scholars of religious studies influenced by Chinese Communist Party politics, its aim is to deconstruct conservative Christian faith and churches.

Beijing Theology—the theological system sanctioned by the Communist government’s TSPM. Since 1998, the TSPM has been reconstructing the conservative theology inherited from Western missionaries before 1952; the aim is to adulterate biblical theology by combining liberal theology and Chinese Communist ideology.

House Church Theology—based on and developed from Evangelical Theology; the aim is to establish healthy, viable churches. This is the most influential theology among churches and Christians in China today.

The first three theologies have very limited influence among churches and Christians in China today, but they are the only ones addressed in this book.

The book’s nineteen papers are organized into three sections. The eight papers in the first section, “**Christianity in Relation to the Chinese Religious Tradition**,” compare Christianity and Chinese traditional religions and philosophies, focusing on the moral and ethical commonalities and differences.

The first paper, “The Goodness of Human Nature and Original Sin: A Point of Convergence

in Chinese and Western Cultures” by Zhao Dunhua, is an excellent treatment of the historical theological debate between Confucianism’s emphasis of the goodness of human nature and Christianity’s teaching that humans are fallen. While Western scholars generally have “emphasized the irreconcilable conflict between [the] Christian doctrine of original sin and Confucianist theory of the goodness of human nature” (3), the paper argues that the two views are not only not logically contradictory, but also theoretically complementary. Of the first point, Zhao says, “The mainstream of Confucianism endorses Mencius’s theory of the goodness of human nature but incorporates in it some Confucianists’ theory of the mixture of good and evil in human nature from the perspective of the individual, and the degrees (pure good, mixture of the good and evil, and complete evil) of human nature from the collective perspective” (5-6). About the complementary nature of the two views, he says, “both ... stress the necessity of perfecting human nature and urge people to meet some moral demands” (10).

Zhao skillfully argues the similarities between Confucianism and Christianity by pointing out that both world views acknowledge that human nature is both good and bad and by emphasizing their common ethical goal. The key difference that Zhao fails to address, however, is that Confucianism is not a religion, but a moral-ethical system that requires enforcement by some power group, either the government or the family. Christianity, on the other hand, *is* a religion, and one that does not rely on dominant social groups but, in fact, most often grows from weaker ones. Furthermore, Confucianism, unlike Christianity, emphasizes humanity’s good nature to promote a solution, based on the belief that humans can solve their own problems themselves, that is, without supernatural involvement, through an ethical system (as taught by mainstream Confucianism) or a legal system as taught by Xunzi. This view mirrors the communist ethical proposition, and it is why the Chinese Communists have since the 1970s enlisted Confucianism to their cause. Christianity, on the other hand, emphasizes humanity’s fallen nature to point out that humans cannot solve their own problems and need spiritual salvation and divine ethical guidance from the biblical Creator. The gross ethical corruption throughout China today proves that humans, or at least the Chinese people, cannot solve their own problems themselves, but need help and rescue.

The book’s second section, “**Christianity in the Context of Modern China**,” contains six papers on the contextualization of Christianity in China, in particular, the integration of Christianity into the Chinese context, the contradictions between the two, and the contributions of Christianity. The dominant tone is that, since “Chinese cultural tradition is self-sufficient for meeting China’s spiritual, intellectual, moral and social needs” (211), Christianity must therefore adapt and be integrated. This view is well represented in this section’s first paper, “Comprehensive Theology: An Attempt to Combine Christianity with Chinese Culture.”

The author, Zhuo Xiping, a well-known religious studies scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, writes that “seeking similarity between Christianity and Chinese culture is the precondition and basis of constructing a comprehensive theology and real Chinese Christianity.” Basically, he supports the view of early twentieth century Chinese liberal theologians, claiming that “the God hidden within the Four Books and Five Classics is the same as the God of the Bible” (187). He even proposes “[writing] a kind of Christian historical philosophy using the Chinese historical-critical method of yin-yang order-disorder” (189) to bring “Chinese traditional cultural ideologies into Christian faith and to lead the whole system with the Dao of Christ” (191).

Zhuo’s suggestion is typical syncretism, not contextualization. His approach sees many similarities between the Bible and the Chinese classics because, when both are viewed from an atheistic or a deistic perspective, evidence can be found in the Chinese classics of theism or supernaturalism, which are then regarded as similar to Christianity. This liberal trend is also promoted by some overseas Chinese Christians, most notably Yuan Zhiming, author of *Lao-zi and Christ*. Following this line of reasoning, one could posit that Islam and its holy book, the Quran, have much more in common with Christianity and Bible than do the Chinese classics and religions.

Does that mean Christians should also embrace Islam?

Chinese academics, influenced by their post-modernist liberal theology “comrades” in the West, have been pushing this trend of theological reconstruction for “made in China Christianity” through anti-Western nationalism directed specifically at the West’s Christian and democratic culture, since the main promoter of this view is the Chinese Communist government. Hence, this view is widely rejected by most churches in China, and the situation is not at all as Zhuo says, that “such a direction is becoming the mainstream of developing Chinese contemporary Christianity” (185).

The main theme of the five papers in the third section, **“Challenges to the Contemporary Chinese Protestant Church,”** is how to reconstruct conservative Christian theology to fit Chinese socialist society – an adaptation that is supposed to occur as part of the theological vision of the TSPM, or more specifically, the vision of Ding Guangxun, the head of the TSPM and its sister body, the China Christian Council. One of the papers is an apologetics-like defense of this theological vision in response to opposition voices, which the paper does not identify, but which clearly were those of “house church” Christians.

The first paper in this section, “The Basis for the Reconstruction of Chinese Theological Thinking” by TSPM vice chairman Deng Fucun, is a typical example of the TSPM theological vision at work. “House church” theologians call this “Beijing Theology,” and it has these features: love the nation (or even love the Communist Party, as we have seen recently) and love Christianity; deny miracles; and espouse justification by love.

Deng’s paper asserts that “over the past five years [that is, since 1998], the Chinese church has been rethinking its theology, and this has been noticed by churches in other countries” (297). The “Chinese church” to which he refers here is only the government-sanctioned TSPM Protestant churches and does not include Protestant “house churches.” Therefore, to use the term “Chinese church” is simply inaccurate.

Deng also says that the TSPM’s work over its fifty-year history “proves that Christian theology can be adapted to a socialist society,” but adds that “conservative theological thinking can have results that are not compatible with our socialist country” (299). He lists examples of some of these unwelcome results (300), including:

“...it draws a clear line between believers and nonbelievers, and regards all Christian believers as of one family”;

“It places the church above country and emphasizes that Christian’s love for the church must be prior to that for the country”;

“...listening to God but not to men”;

“It claims that to join with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement is to ‘submit the church to government control.’”

Deng even says, “the doctrine of justification by faith is not included ... it is only a doctrine.... We do not emphasize it” (307).

All this clearly shows that the goal of the TSPM’s theological reconstruction is to subdue the church and bring it under government control, and that heretical patriotism is the first commandment for TSPM Christians.

Christianity and Chinese Culture presents a limited theological picture of churches in China, because it totally ignores the existence of “house churches,” which have 45-60 million believers compared with the 18-30 million believers in TSPM churches. Therefore, the book presents a seriously limited view of Christianity in China and cannot be viewed as either comprehensive or

authoritative in what it says about Christianity in China. As such, I do not recommend that the GCTS bookstore sell it, nor that CUME students and alumni buy it. Nonetheless, it is a good collection of papers about the other three theological trends, though they have very limited influence on churches in China today, and I would, therefore, recommend that CUME professors use it for courses related to churches in China.

Mark Chuanhang Shan, from Xinjiang, China, has written a number of books and articles, including *History of Christianity in Xinjiang, China* (Boston: Chinese Theological Association, 2009). He has an M.A.R. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and an S.T.M. from Boston University's School of Theology, and is currently in a Ph.D. research program in Church History and Historical Theology at the London School of Theology, in Britain's Middlesex University, through the Julius Africanus Guild of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (CUME). This review was edited by Charlene L. Fu.

Beware of Patriotic Heresy in the Church in China

---- Drawing on the historical lessons of
the Nazi's Volk Church to analyze the Zhao Xiao phenomenon

by Mark C. H. Shan

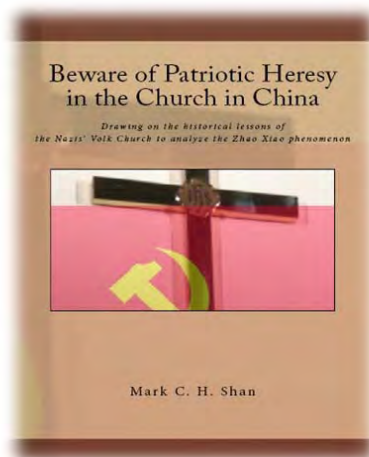
The phenomenal growth of the church in China has attracted worldwide attention and given Chinese Christians everywhere hope that Christianity can bring positive change to mainland China. But in the midst of this widespread optimism lurks an insidious danger—a danger that China's Communist government has adeptly manipulated and utilized, and which has ensnared even China's House Church as well as overseas Chinese churches and Christians.

Mark C. H. Shan, a House Church scholar originally from mainland China, carefully examines this danger and points out the alarming parallels with the German Church under Nazism. Shan sounds a sharp warning for Chinese Christians worldwide: patriotism is already starting to replace God's rightful place in the Chinese church, and if Chinese Christians are not careful, they are in danger of walking down the same dark road of the Nazi-era German Christians, who placed their German identity and loyalty to the Nazi government above their responsibility as children of God to oppose evil, and so failed to speak out against the Holocaust.

"... a powerful warning from history of the dangers of a theologized nationalism for the body of Christ..."

—David Aikman, author of "Jesus in Beijing" and other books

Available October 2012, published by the Chinese Christian Theological Association, Boston (www.CCTA.me). Print and Kindle versions of this book are available on www.Amazon.com
Author's email: Mark@ccta.me



Review of *The Holy Spirit in Mission: Prophetic Speech and Action in Christian Witness* by Gary Tyra (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011)

Woodrow E. Walton

The heart of Dr. Tyra's book is in his third chapter, which he aptly entitled "The Spirit Bade Me Go," as what he presents throughout his work is the primacy of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the church. The first two chapters leading up to the third chapter provide the biblical basis for his approach. Judging from his references to both Christopher J.H. Wright and Darrell Guder, Tyra uses the adjective "missional" to describe the action of God in His people. Rather than speaking of the Church having a mission or sending out missionaries, Tyra sees the Church as caught up in the Father's own mission through the prompting of His Holy Spirit upon His people. Ownership of mission belongs to God and is carried out by those within the fellowship (the Church) who respond to His Word and act upon it toward others and the whole world.

Tyra's unique contribution beyond Guder and Wright is emphasizing the prophetic speech of the Holy Spirit which prompts and empowers those who respond in proclamation, edification, equipping, and "living engagement . . . toward . . . a more . . . just, humane society, and a clean, healthy environment" (24). This quotation also reveals another aspect of Tyra's book. He has the same sweeping vision and conviction as does Christopher Wright¹ and Howard Peshett and Vinoth Ramachandra.² He does not conceive of God's mission involving only evangelism. It starts there but does not end there. God seeks to restore all creation to himself. Tyra's conviction is that a faithful engagement in missional ministry involves both gospel proclamation and a living engagement with God's ultimate intent (24), namely the restoration of all creation, socially and environmentally.

The author distances himself from the "personal prophecy" that "goes on in many charismatic prayer meetings" (71, n. 55). He defines prophetic speech as that which proclaims Jesus, encourages others, and prompts one to respond to that spoken Word from God in outreach to others and the world. Tyra refers to Paul's pneumatology as basically missional rather than soteriological. The Holy Spirit empowers for mission even while pouring "out the love of God in our hearts" (Rom 5:5) for salvation. Here he treads a ground between Stronstad's vocational position and Stott's salvific grasp of the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in Mission is geared toward church leaders and those who are involved in setting mission policy as well as toward upper level students planning for Christian ministry. His use of long theological and academic terms in some paragraphs, particularly in chapters 3 and 4, would discourage the man and woman in the pew, and, perhaps, some pastors, and the newly arrived student in college. Not many people are conversant with "soteriology," "pneumatology," "methodological," and similar terminology.

There is concern about the use of the term "missional," first coined about ten years ago and which has become close to being an "in-word" from overuse. Even Alan Hirsch, who highly recommends *The Holy Spirit in Mission* on the back cover, recently, in a preface to Michael Frost's *The Road to Missional*,³ considers "missional" as overused. It is meant to convey that every member of a congregation is a missionary and that every congregation is an outreaching body rather than a magnet attracting people to itself.

1 Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 51.

2 Howard Peshett and Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Message of Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 13.

3 Reference is to Alan Hirsch's comment in his preface to Frost's *The Road to Missional* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), which appeared in Rob Wegner's article "Missional in Real Life." *Outreach* (January/February 2012): 50–57.

These two features, however, do not detract from the book's importance for Christian mission. It is a strong voice for the Pentecostal approach to mission activity. The author not only acknowledges a virtual army of known Pentecostal missiologists as Dempster, Peterson, Hodges, and Klaus, *et al*, but also the seminal work of Roland Allen, Leslie Newbigin, A.J. Gordon, and Marguerite Kraft, to name a few. He definitely is in tune with Christopher Wright.

The Holy Spirit in Mission addresses still another critical concern, especially for the mission field, one recently raised by Jim Harries of the Alliance of Vulnerable Missions and a long-time missionary in Kenya. Between pages 133 and 145, Tyra went further than Hesselgrave and others on the issue of "contextualizing" the gospel. For Tyra, "contextualization" should "involve a conversation with three entities not two: the biblical text, the cultural context and the Spirit of mission" (139). Such a conversation can prevent accommodation, and, possibly, syncretism. By the same conversation, the linguist and translator can be aided without the use of a foreign language as an intermediary between biblical language and the indigenous language.

In summary, *The Holy Spirit in Mission* would be an invaluable tool for church leaders, church planters, mission policymakers, and missionaries not only within pentecostal circles, but also within non-pentecostal evangelical church bodies. It is also worth reading by college and seminary students studying for the Christian ministry once they get beyond the "freshman" year. In point of fact, between pages 179 and 185, Tyra addresses the Christian academies of learning.

Woodrow E. Walton, D. Min. (Oral Roberts University School of Theology and Missions, 1993) is retired, an ordained Assembly of God minister, member of The International Society of Frontier Missions, Evangelical Theological Society, and "The Long African Day Coalition" of the Division of World Missions of the Assemblies of God.

WIPF & STOCK

An Imprint of WIPF and STOCK Publishers

199 West 8th Avenue, Suite 3, Eugene, OR 97401

Tel. (541) 344-1528 • Fax (541) 344-1506

Visit our Web site at www.wipfandstock.com

An Historian Looks at 1 Timothy 2:11–14

*The Authentic Traditional Interpretation
and Why It Disappeared*

J. G. BROWN

In the controversy over the role of women in the church, complementarians/hierarchists routinely claim to be upholding the “traditional” position. Like the little boy who declared that “the emperor has no clothes,” J. G. Brown exposes the fallacies in this claim. The authentic traditional interpretation of passages such as 1 Timothy 2:11–14 differs substantially from contemporary readings, whether egalitarian or hierarchist. Most prominent Protestant exegetes—from Luther and Calvin through those in the early nineteenth century—understood creation ordinances (male headship/female subordination) as foundational to the temporal world, not the church. *An Historian Looks at 1 Timothy 2:11–14* brings history and theology together in a fresh way, with startling implications for the ongoing debate.

“For years 1 Timothy 2:11–14 has been at the center of an exegetical firestorm prompted by the ongoing debate over what the Bible says about women’s place in church and society. Providing new grist for an old mill, J. G. Brown poses a bold challenge to those who appeal to the ‘traditional’ argument that complementarianism is embedded in the creational order. This invocation of tradition, Brown provocatively argues, is misguided precisely because it is historically unfounded.”

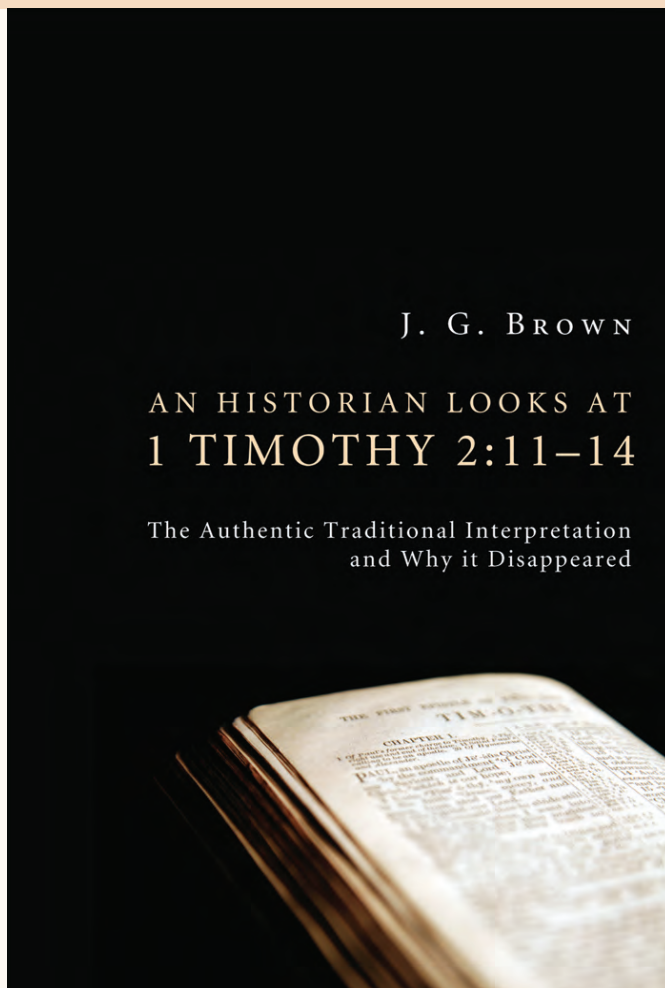
—Nicholas Perrin

Franklin S. Dyrness Chair of Biblical Studies, Wheaton College

J. G. BROWN

AN HISTORIAN LOOKS AT 1 TIMOTHY 2:11–14

The Authentic Traditional Interpretation
and Why it Disappeared



ISBN 13: 978-1-61097-600-8 | 118 pp. | \$15.00 | paper

Order by phone (541) 344-1528, fax (541) 344-1506, or e-mail orders@wipfandstock.com

Review of *Early Libyan Christianity: Uncovering a North African Tradition* by Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011)

Brendan Payne

What can we discover about Libya's ancient Christian history, which has had significant impact yet been ignored by many Euro-centric scholars and Afro-centric theologians alike? This is the question Thomas Oden asks in this book, which surveys ancient Libyan Christianity and urges an audience of moderate Muslim Libyans, Africans of all religions, and Christians the world over to rediscover this rich but largely ignored intellectual heritage of ancient North Africa. He also hopes to inspire a new generation of scholars – particularly Africans – to unearth further the Libyan tradition that lies just beneath the surface but noticeably unexamined. In addition, Libya's strategic position on the borders of East and West, Africa and Europe, and Christian and Islamic cultures further makes it a strategic location for Christianity's future as well as its past (36). The book examines over a half millennium of significant Christian intellectual and architectural contributions from about AD 68 to 643, the date of the Arab Islamic conquest.

Oden comes to the subject with exceptional credentials. A former Professor of Theology at Drew University, Oden is the current director of the Center for Early African Christianity at Eastern University. During two decades working as the general editor of the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, he was intrigued how many ancient theologians came from Africa, how great an impact they had on Christianity, and how little recognition they had received, except by African theologians like Lamin Sanneh, Bénézet Bujo, and Kwame Bedaiko (43, 19). This curiosity led to the Early African Christianity Series, which highlights the neglected contributions of Africans to intellectual and Christian history. The present book is the third in the series. Yet, the specific neglect of Libya among scholars stands out even amongst the comparative general academic neglect towards African Christianity. To address this oversight, Oden analyses many patristic and other primary sources to uncover this North African tradition. He also provides a useful registry of known early Christian locations, a broad bibliography, and excellent indices by subject, ancient texts, and Scripture.

Following the introductory chapter 1, chapter 2 deals with Libya's significant role in biblical history, while chapters 3 and 4 address the role of Libyans in apostolic Christianity ranging from diaspora Jews like Simon of Cyrene to (perhaps) Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Against the conventional wisdom that Africans learned of the gospel from Europeans, Oden argues that Libyans played a critical role in spreading the gospel to Gentiles and Europeans (104). Chapter 5 surveys the Libyan roots of Christian voices before Nicaea, such as Pope Victor the African, the great theologian Tertullian, archheretics Sabellius and Arius, and early saints like Wasilla and Theodore. Chapter 6 examines the influential role of the Libyan Christian philosopher Synesius of Cyrene (around A.D. 400). Chapter 7 looks at Cyrene as the center of ancient Libyan Christianity, while chapter 8 looks at the once Greek-speaking eastern Libya, and chapter 9 examines the Latin-speaking northwestern Libya, Tripolitania. Chapter 10 offers a summary of the book with reflections on providential history, followed by a brief conclusion.

Oden admits the book's chief weakness is the tentativeness and seeming vulnerability of some of his arguments, such as the speculated Libyan birthplaces of Pope Victor and Tertullian (303). He compares himself to a zealous lawyer defending a wronged client and admits he may have overstated some arguments in the intensity of his advocacy (302). Another weakness of the book, by the author's own acknowledgment, is that it is only an "early embryonic effort inviting others to improve on it" (304). Yet, the book is a needed first step towards rediscovering

an especially neglected African Christian history. His call for Christian-Islamic dialogue on providence is theologically complex but potentially fruitful. I highly recommend this to all students and professors of church history, and hope this book will inspire others to discover more about Christianity in ancient Libya, especially younger Africans eager to recover their own Christian tradition.

Brendan Payne graduated Magna Cum Laude from Wheaton College (IL) with a B.A. in History and from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, S. Hamilton with an M.Div. He is pursuing ordained ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and is studying at Baylor University's History Ph.D. program to study American religion and social reform.

Review of *The Women's Study Bible: New Living Translation* edited by Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Jennifer Creamer

Given the abundant variety of study Bibles available today, what makes *The Women's Study Bible* unique? Perhaps the greatest uniqueness of *The Women's Study Bible* is the culturally diverse group of contributors. These authors are scholars from different parts of the world, with different cultures, and with different denominational backgrounds. All contributors would affirm the inspiration of Scripture and have a high view of women.

Each book of the Bible is prefaced with introductory information and a general outline of the structure of the book. While there is considerable variety in what is covered in the introductory information, there is usually some discussion of main themes, authorship, and date of writing. Each book contains commentary style notes on the bottom of each page, as is conventional for study Bibles. Inset sidebar essays cover topics ranging from general background information to subjects of particular interest to women. The Book of Esther, for instance, has insets on "The Persian Empire" as well as "The Power and Potential of Women." The last section of *The Women's Study Bible* features more than three hundred pages of supplementary information. This includes essays on the "Geography of the Bible" and "Cultural Contexts" from the early days of the nation of Israel through the Roman Empire. Two timelines are included, as well as a glossary, a concordance, and a set of nine maps with an index. Most of the maps are displayed over two pages, making them not only visually appealing, but also easy to navigate.

The editors of *The Women's Study Bible* make it clear in the introduction that they have given authors a wide berth: "Each writer has been given a great deal of freedom. There is considerable variety in points of view and style – not all agree, and not all reflect the views of the editors or the publisher" (xxiv). Indeed, the reader will notice variety not only in the length of introductory material for each book, but also in scholarly viewpoints from book to book. This is seen most clearly, perhaps, in matters related to author and date. In the Pentateuch, for instance, some introductions lean towards Mosaic authorship, while others lean towards the possibility of J, E, D and P sources with a later redactor. Not all readers will agree.

The diversity of contributors also makes for great variety in the types of comments given for each book. Notes for some books are rich in information explaining the cultural background, others are rich in discussion of literary style, context, or application to life in the contemporary setting. Many comments display a thoughtful exegesis of the text. This is particularly true of some of the more difficult passages that relate to women. At times, though, comments may simply re-state or summarize the text, without further elucidation. Nonetheless, the primary objective is to trace the theme of women in the Bible. In this respect, the *Women's Study Bible* consistently delivers a message of encouragement for women to use their gifts.

Despite the occasional questionable comment, this volume may still be a helpful resource for the discerning student of Scripture. Overall, the *Women's Study Bible* is an encouraging reminder that the heroes of the faith are not only Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, and Paul, but also Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Phoebe, Priscilla, and a host of others. Within this compendium of diverse scholarship, one resounding message is heard: God uses women, as well as men, to accomplish his purposes.

Jennifer has taught biblical studies with the University of the Nations on three continents. She holds master's degrees in both Old and New Testament from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She is currently studying for her doctorate in New Testament at North-West University, and is a member of CUME's Africanus Guild.

Review of *How to Understand Your Bible* by T. N. Sterrett & R. L. Schultz (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2010)

Shirley Barron

This book is intended for young Christians, especially college students, and other laypeople. The authors have had lengthy experience with teaching Bible study to students and laity. Sterrett worked with International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) in India for many years, and Schultz teaches Biblical Studies at Wheaton College (IL). The first edition by Sterrett alone was published in 1973.

The goal of the book is to show the inexperienced Bible reader that she can, in fact, understand the Bible, if willing to put forth the effort to study in a systematic way. The authors emphasize that one must have determination and commitment, as well as dependence on the Holy Spirit.

The book has four sections. The first discusses what interpretation is, why it matters, and what tools one would need. The second discusses principles of interpretation such as using context, discerning the author's intention, exploring background, paying attention to words and grammar, and interpreting Scripture by Scripture. The third section examines parables, figures of speech, symbols and types, idioms, and the characteristics of Hebrew poetry. The fourth section goes into how we can apply what the Bible says to our own lives. We do not study the Bible simply to gain information; we must use what we learn to make decisions, to behave ethically, to formulate doctrine.

Near the beginning of the book, the authors discuss the issue of objectivity and presuppositions. They point out that it is desirable to work from some basic convictions: that the Bible is the unique Word of God; that the Bible can be adequately understood in translation; that the Bible is its own interpreter; and that it uses normal human language. We as readers need to be diligent, honest, discerning, and willing to obey what we see the Scripture saying to us. We will not benefit much from mere casual reading. The authors point out that not everything in Scripture is or ought to be seen as applying to an individual present-day person; application is to be done with great care and with attention to the original context.

There is good discussion of the relationship of the Old Testament to the New and the need for recognizing the progressive nature of revelation. The authors emphasize the unity of the testaments and the central role of Christ in both testaments.

The examples given in the various discussions are quite apt. The last section of the book takes a Scripture passage (Psalm 51) and applies the various principles readers have learned to interpret a passage. The chapter is rather brief but useful. The authors have developed a type of charting to compare the parts of a metaphor (such as Jesus = Good Shepherd) (139) or to compare type and anti-type (such as the Passover Lamb and Christ the Lamb of God) (127), which is interesting and useful.

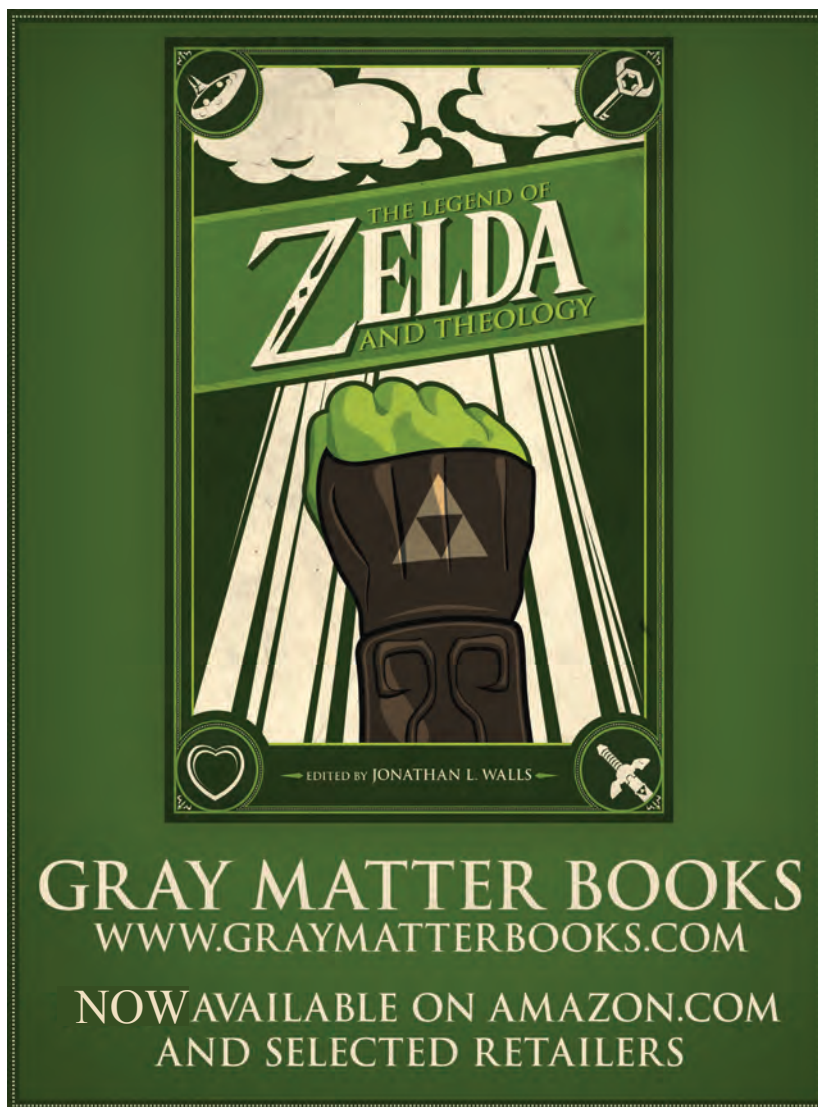
A brief chapter on doctrine gives good guidelines for seeing how doctrinal teaching is developed from the scriptural principles of interpretation. The book rightfully emphasizes that one must proceed cautiously here, not trying to base a doctrinal conclusion on a single passage.

The chapters on figures of speech, types, symbols, poetry, and Hebrew idioms are very good, but I would like to have seen a chapter on Greek idioms as well.

This book is especially geared to the less-experienced student of the Bible; the layout is easy to read; the chapters are relatively short; the points in each chapter are numbered or bulleted; the

progression of thought is logical and easy to follow. The book will be useful not only to beginning students, but also for those teachers who may be leading such students.

Shirley L. Barron, M.A. in Biblical Studies, Wheaton College (IL), M.D., University of Kentucky College of Medicine, has practiced medicine in public health, pathology, and general practice for many years. She is a faculty-mentor for Columbia Evangelical Seminary, Fairview, WA, teaching Greek and New Testament studies. She has taught Latin at Wheaton College and basic Koine Greek to interested members of her local church.



The Legend of Zelda and Theology freshly engages holy yearnings in the world's bestselling epic video-game series. It includes a chapter by Benjamin B. DeVan on the series' nuances of ethics and virtue.

Review of *A Friendly Letter to Skeptics and Atheists: Musings on Why God Is Good and Faith Isn't Evil* by David G. Myers (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008) and *Know Doubt: The Importance of Embracing Uncertainty in Your Faith* (Published first in hardcover as *Faith and Doubt*, 2008) by John Ortberg (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009)

Benjamin B. DeVan

“Of making many books there is no end,” observed the Hebrew Bible’s consummate skeptic, “and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Eccles 12:12, NRSV). The first prognosis, if not the latter, is readily applicable to historic and contemporary writings denouncing or defending the existence and character of God and the myriad forms or expressions of belief, theology, ethics, rituals, and practices regularly categorized under the rubric “religion.”

The Neo- or New Atheists and their mostly though not exclusively Christian interlocutors continue this trend primarily in Europe and North America. For example, Richard Dawkins’ *The God Delusion* was purportedly available in at least thirty-two languages by April, 2009.¹ Royce Gruenler in the *Africanus Journal* also reviewed one contribution to twenty-first century “God debates,” *Contending with Christianity’s Critics: Answering New Atheists & Other Objectors*.²

Two additional under-noted offerings to this conversation are *A Friendly Letter to Skeptics and Atheists* by psychologist David G. Myers, and *Know Doubt*, published first in hardcover as *Faith and Doubt*, by John Ortberg. Myers is Professor of Psychology at Hope College, an accomplished social psychologist and author of several popular psychology textbooks, one nearing its tenth edition.³ Ortberg earned his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Fuller Theological Seminary, was formerly a teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, and is now Senior Pastor at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in California.

Rather than perpetuating “weariness of the flesh,” heart, mind, or spirit, Myers and Ortberg billow fresh wind and warm fire, invigorating readers interested in or influenced by New Atheists and related issues. Evangelical science luminaries Alister McGrath, Francis Collins (former director of the Human Genome Project, current director of the National Institutes of Health), and Harvard University’s Owen Gingerich endorse Myers’ “friendly letter” (Back Cover).⁴ Although Myers displayed liberal Protestant affinities previously in *What God Has Joined Together? A Christian Case for Gay Marriage*, evangelicals who reject Myers’ gay marriage advocacy can still benefit from and appreciate *A Friendly Letter to Skeptics and Atheists*, which utilizes twentieth and twenty-first century social science to undermine or overturn numerous New Atheist conceits.⁵ Even celebrity atheist Michael Shermer, who repeatedly collaborates with Richard Dawkins, praises Myers as “a

1 Jennifer Morrison, “Pupils Quiz Professor on Evolution,” *Inverness Courier*, April 29, 2009, online: *The Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science*, <http://richarddawkins.net/articles/3800-pupils-quiz-professor-on-evolution> (accessed November 27, 2011).

2 Royce Gordon Gruenler, “Review of *Contending with Christianity’s Critics: Answering the New Atheists & Other Objectors* edited by Paul Copan and William Lane Craig (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2009),” *Africanus Journal* 2:2 (Nov., 2010), 70-72.

3 David G. Myers, *Psychology: Tenth Edition* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2013).

4 Cf. Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006); Owen Gingerich, *God’s Universe* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006); Alister McGrath, *Dawkins’ God: Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); Alister McGrath, *Why Won’t God Go Away: Is the New Atheism Running on Empty?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010).

5 David G. Myers and Letha Dawson Scanzoni, *What God Has Joined Together? A [The in the 2006 edition] Christian Case for Gay Marriage* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005, HarperOne, 2006).

world-class debunker of all things nonsense, and yet a man of faith. How can these two traditions be reconciled? Read this book to find out” (Back Cover).

Myers avows, “Religion in some forms has indeed fed prejudice and atrocity, [but] the available evidence is pretty compelling; In the Western world, at least, religiosity is more often associated with good—with happiness, health, generosity, and volunteering—than with evil” (vi). Myers demonstrates how New Atheists selectively parade social science data allegedly favorable to atheism gleaned from “secular countries whose values were fed by a Christian heritage and the protestant ethic,” but omit less flattering atheist demographics such as “antireligious North Korea, China, Vietnam, and the former Soviet States” (65). New Atheists also fail to differentiate religion as a control factor and statistics on religious individuals from regional and societal data.

Myers’ analysis reveals that religiously active individuals (usually Jews or Christians in the available social and health science records) are less likely to divorce, smoke, cheat on taxes, be arrested for criminal activity, or fail to report damaging a parked car. Myers finds that faith fosters marital fidelity, health, longevity, compassion, and emotional well-being. Committed and active (rather than nominal) religious believers more frequently support civil rights, volunteer, and give generously to “secular” charities on top of charitable gifts to their home congregations.

In light of this, New Atheists broadcasting nasty anecdotes to malign religion are equivalent to “judging science by eugenics, nuclear warheads, and chemical pollutants” (100). Myers, moreover, surveys intercessory prayer studies, mind/body dualism, the fine-tuning of the universe, the tendency of angry atheists collectively to manifest characteristics of a mono-ethnic “Boys Club” (17, 22), and how Christian views of God and nature motivated “scientific Magellans” including Bacon, Galileo, Kepler, Mendel, Pascal, and Newton (18-19).

Myers explicitly refutes multiple social science pretenses disseminated by New Atheists, and spices his professional scrutiny with personal and pastoral insights. Myers celebrates Eric Liddell (memorialized in the 1981 Oscar winning *Chariots of Fire*), Martin Luther King, Jr., and the fictional *Pinocchio* who displays childlike (not childish?) faith toward his maker Geppeto, “Papa, I am not sure who I am. But if I’m all right with you, then I guess I’m all right with me” (58).

Myers freely admits positive factors correlated with faith do not prove religious (or any particular religion’s?) truth claims. But the spiritual fruit Myers samples does challenge New Atheist and other presumptions that “the world would be a better place without religion” (91).

If Myers is a psychologist exhibiting a pastor’s heart, Ortberg is a pastor applying psychology and theology to intellectual enigmas and emotions surrounding faith and doubt. Ortberg parallels Timothy Keller in *The Reason for God* and Lee Strobel (in an interview with Lynn Anderson) eight years earlier in *The Case for Faith* affirming doubt as inherent to mature faith, rather than its adversary: “In the phrase [faith and doubt] the most important word is...in the middle” (10).⁶

It is difficult to convey the strengths of *Know Doubt* without spoiling Ortberg’s vulnerable, vivid, and vibrant voice. Echoing Martin Luther and Billy Graham, Ortberg confesses in his opening paragraphs, “After I die, if it all turns out to be true...death is defeated, the roll is called up yonder and there I am – there is a part of me that will be surprised. What do you know? It’s all true after all” (9, 24). Does doubt lead inexorably to atheism or agnosticism?

Ortberg says no, seeing some doubt as holy. Doubt reduces gullibility, prods us to pursue clarification, provides opportunities for authenticity with God, and helps us grow as we wrestle with difficult questions. Doubt even facilitates humility before God if (and when) we never find fully satisfactory answers in this life. Where doubt goes bad is when we become enslaved to it, locked perpetually in a state of indecision, yielding to despair, cynicism, or cowardly avoidance of

6 Cf. Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Dutton, 2008); Lee Strobel, “Objection #8: I Still Have Doubts, So I Can’t Be a Christian,” in *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 223-245.

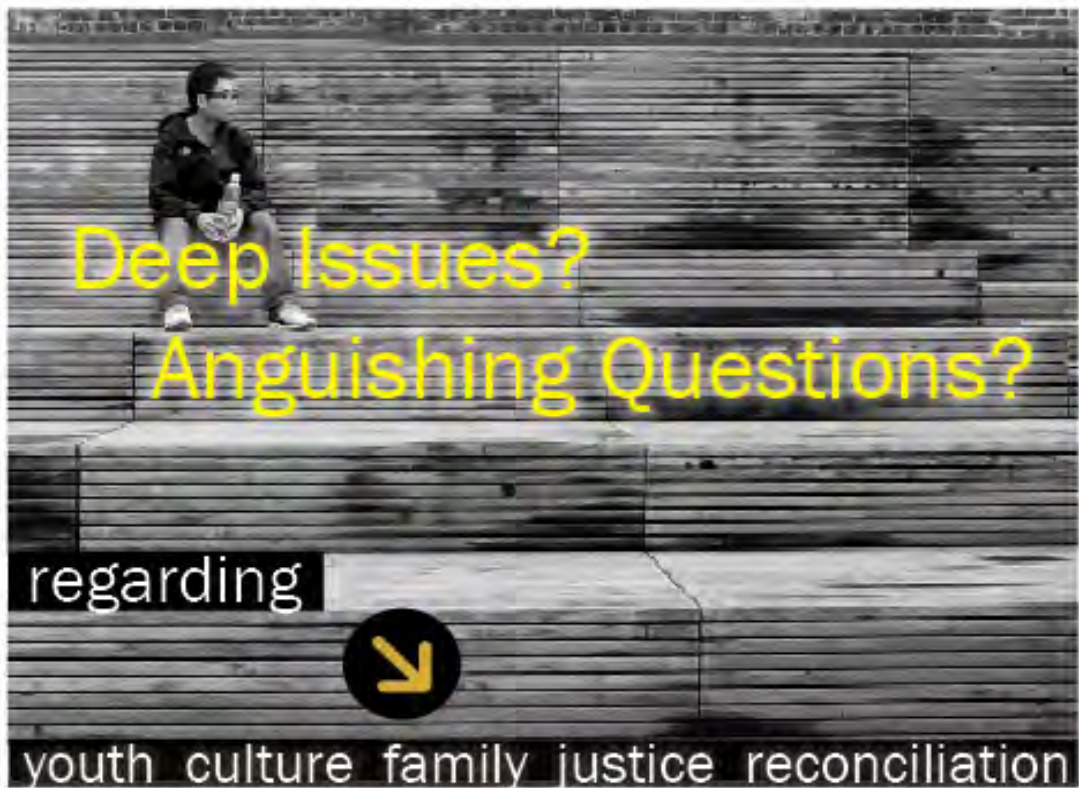
small and momentous choices essential to a meaningful life. Faith properly informed by doubt does not lead to paralysis. It “is an exercise in strategic uncertainty” (137).

As hinted above by allusions to Keller’s *The Reason for God* and Strobel’s *The Case for Faith*, Ortberg’s insights are not unique. But the way Ortberg explores them, integrating humor, popular culture, “white-hot” doubts expressed by biblical characters (142), philosophers from William James to William Clifford, and critiquing New Atheists without descending into impenetrably technical gobbledygook, is refreshing. These features are also why Ortberg is winsome and entrancing enough to prompt reflection in everyday doubters whose faith might be destabilized by New Atheists and analogous antagonists wielding God-given talents for humor, compelling rhetoric, and personal testimony in endeavoring to eradicate faith in God.

Myers and Ortberg do not demolish every New Atheist supposition. The number of pages in both books combined is more than one hundred pages shorter than *The God Delusion*. Yet Myers playfully joins the fray as a Christian social scientist, while Ortberg capably cultivates the Christian tradition of holy doubting. Perusing or meditating on Myers and Ortberg in tandem or with further sagacious rejoinders by Timothy Keller, Mary Eberstadt, John Lennox, David Marshall, and David Robertson promises to be enjoyable, synergistic, and thought provoking for many pensive doubters, skeptics, university and seminary students and professors, pastors, counselors, and additional inquisitive observers or participants in the “God Debates.”⁷

Benjamin B. DeVan has taught religion, philosophy, and African American literature at North Carolina Central University, Peace College, and a January term mini-course at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, “Religion: Bringing the World Together, or Tearing the World Apart?” He completed an MA in Counseling at Asbury Theological Seminary, an M.Div. at Duke University, a Th.M. at Harvard in World Religions with a thesis on Evangelical Christians and Muslims, and is now a doctoral candidate at the University of Durham writing a dissertation on the New Atheism.

⁷ E.g. Mary Eberstadt, *The Loser Letters: A Comic Tale of Life, Death, and Atheism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010); John Lennox, *God’s Undertaker: Has Science Buried God? New Updated Edition* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2009); *The Truth Behind the New Atheism* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2007); David Robertson, *The Dawkins Letters: Challenging Atheist Myths* (Ross-Shire: Christian Focus, 2007, Revised and Updated 2010).



For information visit
www.centerforyouth.org

Review of *The Sacramental Church* by John Nash (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011)

Dean Borgman

Theology considers our relationship to God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, our relationship to the Church and to the world. The first four relationships are articulated in the ancient creeds of the Church. According to the Apostles' Creed: "We (or I) believe in God the Father... we believe in Jesus Christ... we believe in the Holy Spirit... we believe in the holy catholic church"—or as the Nicene Creed puts the latter phrase: "We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church." John Nash's book deals with that part of theology classed as ecclesiology. It is, primarily, a study of *one* aspect of *one* church communion—looking at the catholic side of the Anglican Church or Communion.

Some readers of the book, or this review, may at first feel themselves lost in an ecclesiastical forest with few familiar landmarks. Let us first establish some ecclesiastical and historical guideposts. Medieval Catholicism in the British Isles had always struggled for some measure of independence. Celtic tradition was particularly so. But even the more Roman and continental style of Catholicism, which became the dominant form, chafed under some papal dictates. This spirit of British pride came to fruition in the English Reformation, which, while greatly influenced by the continental Reformers, vacillated between Protestant inclinations and Catholic traditions. The Elizabethan compromise attempted to bridge this divide for the sake of national harmony under an established church. This book is evidence that the struggle between "high church" and "low church" is a continuing issue and tension.

The Sacramental Church might also be called "Anglo-Catholicism" or "The Anglo-Catholic Church"—as the first sentence of its preface confirms (xi). The author further explains: "Anglo-Catholicism is an expression of the Anglican faith that attaches great importance to the sacraments, especially the Sacrament of the Altar. It also emphasizes the sacred (we might add, episcopal) ministry that extends back to the time of Christ" (xi). Given their assumptions about worship and revelation, sacramentalists point to biblical evidence for making "the breaking of bread" a central aspect of worship. They also take Christ's institutional words quite literally and see eucharistic significance throughout the Gospel of John (see Oscar Cullmann's *Early Christian Worship*).

Historically, they find many early patristic writings speaking of eucharistically-centered worship with a clear dependence on the authority of bishops—with deacons and presbyters or priests becoming increasingly prominent. As to the nature of the Church, they cite patristic references to the Catholic Church standing against all heresies. Nash's ecclesiology is a generous theology allowing for other opinions and acknowledging differences among the major liturgical churches.

Still, *The Sacramental Church* is polemic, using historical analysis to promote a church exalting transcendence in its architecture and liturgy with a spiritual life adoring God in glorious mystery through the sacraments. As such it is one of many books written from an evangelical or pentecostal background to identify a kind of ground-swell toward a more liturgical worship style. (See, for instance, Tom Howard's *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament*, Robert Webber's *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelicals are Attracted to the Liturgical Church*, and more recently, Pentecostal Simon Chan's *Liturgical Theology*.)

Nash's book is rooted in Anglicanism, a global Anglican Communion consisting of forty churches beyond the Church of England. Its scope is limited, however, to the Anglican or Episcopal Churches of Great Britain, the United States and Canada.

Church history will note two significant movements of the twentieth century. One of these, not mentioned in this book, is the Charismatic Movement, which grew out of the Pentecostal Revival. In the 1960s and 1970s, Pentecostalism had profound impact on mainstream Protestant Churches and the Catholic Church. By the late twentieth century, its style had been incorporated into the worship of many churches worldwide.

A second twentieth century revival was the Liturgical Renewal Movement. This Movement brought liturgical churches closer together, produced a Common Lectionary, and inspired Prayer Book revisions. But this is jumping to the end of John Nash's book, which, in the main, I take to be a preeminent monograph of British ecclesiastical history.

Given his assumptions as to the centrality of worship, it is difficult not to see Nash's analysis of Britain's early Catholic history, its Reformation, the mediating cautions of Hooker (seeing Anglicanism as a *via media* or middle way), the various contributions of the Caroline Divines, then the polemics of the Tractarians or Oxford Movement, and finally recent research of architecture and liturgy, as pointing to anything other than a "Catholic Revival" in Anglicanism and beyond.

Discussing dialogue among liturgical churches, Nash recognizes the criticism of Protestants who say, "If you are so enamored by the historical church and deep into Catholic liturgy, why don't you go all the way and become Catholic—or perhaps even more historically, Eastern Orthodox?" His answer is straight forward:

Major differences (among these churches) remain, including the ordination of women to the Anglican priesthood... In any event, merger negotiations with Rome or Constantinople would confront an awkward asymmetry: Anglicans view themselves as *belonging* to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church; Rome and the Eastern Orthodoxy separately view themselves as being the exclusive expression of that church. (235)

There is much more in this book for students of history. Those interested in comparative liturgical studies will find certain sections and charts valuable. Indeed, anyone interested in the nature of the church and its worship will be here challenged to deeper thought.

John Nash's "Final Reflections" well express the spirit of this book:

Anglo-Catholicism emphasizes God's transcendence and the profound mystery of Christ's birth, transfiguration, death and resurrection.... The gulf between us and the transcendent God is bridged by the incarnation, Mary Theotokos, by the angelic host, by the visible church, and by the sacraments. (266)

Nash is not promoting a strict set of beliefs and practices, but "an array of options that Anglicans (and others) can explore to enhance their religious experience." Anglicanism as a sacramental church has "enabled people of all leanings to find liturgical forms that express their aspirations" (267). Furthermore, the liturgical, sacramental way offers an alternative to naïve and literalistic Fundamentalism, on the one hand, and the barrenness of Liberal Protestantism, on the other. "...Both ignore the rightful place of adoration, aesthetics, and the transcendent mystery in worship; they have destroyed a sense of 'the sacred'" (268).

Finally, Nash rejects the sense that Anglo-Catholicism is "elitist and self-serving" by describing the holistic nature of sacramentalists—their presence in urban ghettos serving the poor and the evangelistic intention of their practices. He concludes:

Anglicanism has recovered its ancient richness and moves into the twenty-first century, adoring God, witnessing to Christ, and serving humanity. Thus the story of the sacramental church goes on. (268)

Dean Borgman is the Charles E. Culpeper Professor of Youth Ministries at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and founder/editor of the Center for Youth Studies (www.centerforyouth.org). He is an Episcopal priest of some thirty years and also teaches courses in social ethics and ecclesiology. Dean is married to Gail and has four children and eight grandchildren.